



THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP



DIETRICH
BONHOEFFER

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THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

TRANSLATED BY R. H. FULLER

FOREWORD BY THE BISHOP OF CHICHESTER

AND MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR BY G. LEIBHOLZ

With a Preface by Reinhold Niebuhr

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PREFACE

by Reinhold Niebuhr

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER was one of the truly creative spirits in the church. This book on "The Cost of Disciple-ship" would be an inspiration and a guide to Christian thought and action in any event, even if we did not know the heroic life and the martyr's death which sealed its truth. But the knowledge of these facts will add weight to the testimony of the book. Bonhoeffer, who spent a year of graduate study in this country, was one of the most resolute and courageous

witnesses to Christ against Nazi tyranny. He was a member of the council of the Confessional Church, which organized the church resistance to Nazism. Much of his time was spent in organizing an "underground" theological seminary, which moved from place to place with a small group of students, evading the regime and preparing young men for the ministry under the hazardous conditions in a tyrannical state.

Bonhoeffer was in and out of prison; but was finally sentenced for participation in the plot on Hitler's life, together with a brother and two brothers-in-law. Execution of his sentence was delayed but his life was taken by the Nazis shortly before our soldiers liberated his prison.

Bonhoeffer was a very sophisticated theologian, at home in all the niceties of theological speculation. But there was nothing arid or academic in his religious life. This book reveals with what simplicity and profundity he grasped the real imperatives of the Christian life. His life revealed with what fidelity he adhered to them. The book, therefore, has value for its own sake; and added value as the testament of one of the true martyr spirits of our day.

FOREWORD

by the Bishop of Chichester

WHEN Christ calls a man", says Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "he bids him come and die." There are different kinds of dying, it is true; but the essence of discipleship is contained in those words. And this marvellous book is a commentary on the cost. Dietrich himself was a martyr many times before he died. He was one of the first as well as one of the bravest witnesses against idolatry. He understood what he chose, when he chose resistance. I knew him in London in the early

days of the evil regime: and from him, more than from any other German, I learned the true character of the conflict, in an intimate friendship. I have no doubt that he did fine work with his German congregation: but he taught many besides his fellow countrymen while a pastor in England. He was crystal clear in his convictions; and young as he was, and humble-minded as he was, he saw the truth, and spoke it with a complete absence of fear. In Stockholm when he came so unexpectedly to see me in 1942, as an emissary from the Opposition, he was exactly the same, completely candid, completely regardless of personal safety, while deeply moved by the shame of the country he loved. Wherever he went, with whomever he was, with students, with those of his own age, or with his elders, he was undaunted, detached from himself, devoted to his friends, to his home, to his country as God meant it to be, to his Church, to his Master. I am very glad that this book, so characteristic of his spirit, is now published in English. It will show men by what fire this young German churchman was possessed. It will also show the cost at which discipleship, in all nations, is to be won.

GEORGE CICESTR:

August 11th, 1948.

MEMOIR

by G. Leibholz

1

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER was born in Breslau on February 4th, 1906, the son of a university professor and leading authority on psychiatry and neurology. His more remote ancestors were theologians, professors, lawyers, artists. From his

mother's side there was also some aristocratic blood in his veins.

His parents, who are still living, are quite outstanding in character and general outlook. They are very clear-sighted, cultured people and uncompromising in all things which matter in life. From his father, Dietrich Bonhoeffer inherited goodness, fairness, self-control and ability; from his mother, his great human understanding and sympathy, his devotion to the cause of the oppressed, and his unshakable steadfastness.

Both his father and mother brought up their son Dietrich with his three brothers, his twin-sister and three other sisters, in Breslau and (from 1912) in Berlin, in that Christian, humanitarian and liberal tradition which to the Bonhoeffers was as native as the air they breathed. It was that spirit which determined Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life from the beginning.

Bonhoeffer was as open as any man could be to all the things which make life beautiful. He rejoiced in the love of his parents, his sisters and brothers, his fiancée, his many friends. He loved the mountains, the flowers, the animals—the greatest and the simplest things in life. His geniality and inborn chivalry, his love of music, art and literature, the firmness of his character, his personal charm and his readiness to listen, made him friends everywhere. But what

marked him most was his unselfishness and preparedness to help others up to the point of self-sacrifice. Whenever others hesitated to undertake a task that required special courage, Bonhoeffer was ready to take the risk.

Theology itself was somehow in his blood. On his mother's side Bonhoeffer's grandfather, von Hase, had been a

chaplain to the Emperor, whose displeasure he incurred when he allowed himself to differ from his political views. When the Emperor stopped attending his services, Hase was urged to tender his resignation. His great-grandfather was Carl von Hase, the most distinguished Church historian in the Germany of the nineteenth century, who tells us in his autobiography of his visit to Goethe in Weimar in 1830, and who (just as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's grandfather on his father's side) was himself imprisoned for his subversive liberal views in the fortress of the High Asperg in 1825.¹ On his father's side he belonged to an old Swabian family which had been living in Württemberg since 1450 and which was also able to claim not a few theologians in previous generations.

This tradition of the Bonhoeffer family may explain why Dietrich Bonhoeffer had already made up his mind at the age of fourteen, when he was still at school, to read theology. At the age of seventeen he entered Tübingen University. A year later he attended courses at Berlin University, and sat at the feet of Adolf von Harnack, R. Seeberg, Lietzmann and others. Harnack soon formed a very high opinion of his character and abilities. Later he came under the influence of Karl Barth's theology which left its mark on Bonhoeffer's first book, *Sanctorum Communio*. In 1928 he went as a curate to Barcelona for a year and in 1930 at the age of twenty-four he became a lecturer in Systematic Theology in Berlin University. But before actually starting with his academic career he went to Union Theological Seminary in New York as "a brilliant and theologically sophisticated young man."²

¹ **For further details on C. von Hase, cf. *Encyclopedia Britannica* Vol. 11, p. 241. Von Hase had made Jena an attractive place for theology and men of learning all over the world.**

² Niebuhr in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* Vol. I, No. 3, March 1946, p. 3.

His writings¹ quickly gave him a firm reputation in the theological world, especially his *Nachfolge* which through his death has gained a new and deep significance; this book greatly impressed theologians throughout the world at the time when it first made its appearance. Thanks to the untiring endeavours of the Editors of the Student Christian Movement Press, it is now being presented to the English-speaking world in an English translation. Some of his other books, especially his *Ethics*, written by him in prison, will be published in this country before long.

A splendid career in the realm of theological scholarship lay thus open before him. In the light of his achievement and in the prospect of what he might have achieved, his death is a great tragedy. But worldly standards cannot measure the loss adequately. For God had chosen him to perform the highest task a Christian can undertake. He has become a martyr. "And seekest thou great things for thyself? Seek them not. For behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh; but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest." "I cannot get away from Jeremiah xlv," wrote Bonhoeffer from the prison cell.

2

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a great realist. He was one of the few who quickly understood, even before Hitler came to power, that National Socialism was a brutal attempt to make history without God and to found it on the strength of man alone. Therefore in 1933, when Hitler came to power, he abandoned his academic career, which seemed to him to have lost its proper meaning. Herein he was unlike most of

his colleagues at German universities, who tried, almost at any price, to come to a compromise with National Socialism.

¹ *Sanctorum Communio: eine Dogmatische Untersuchung zur Soziologie der Kirche*, **1930**; *Akt und Sein*, **1931**; *Schdpfung und Fall*, 1933; *Nachfolge*, **1937**; *Genteinsames Leben*, **1939**; *Ethics* (**still to be published**).

As late as February, 1933, he denounced on the wireless a political system which corrupted and grossly misled a nation and made the “Führer” its idol and God. Then he decided to leave Berlin for London, where, as a pastor, he ministered to two congregations and tried to explain to his British friends, among them especially the Bishop of Chichester, the true character of the German Church struggle. He quickly realized that in the situation in which the world and the Churches found themselves in the 'thirties nothing was gained any longer for the Churches by citing their old credal statements. The ecumenical movement seemed to him to offer the only way of reuniting the various members of the body of Christ. This explains why Bonhoeffer considered it the duty of the Churches to listen anew to the message of the Bible and to put themselves in the context of the whole Church. Therefore no wonder that Bonhoeffer soon played a remarkable role in the ecumenical movement¹ and that it was he who, more than any other teacher in a German university or theological seminary, had made German students familiar with the life, the history and development of the non-Lutheran Churches.

In 1935 Bonhoeffer, already one of the leaders of the Confessional Church, returned to Germany. But he was forbidden by the Gestapo to preach or speak or enter Berlin. Therefore he went to Pomerania to direct an illegal Church Training College, first in a small peninsula in the Baltic, later on in Finkenwalde near Stettin. This College was not formed

after any existing model. It was not an order comprising men living in ascetic seclusion; nor was it a Training College in the ordinary sense of the word. The attempt was made here to live the “community life” of a Christian as described in one of Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s shorter writings. Young ministers who came from all over the Reich learned here what is so sorely needed to-day—namely, how in the

¹ He was a member of the Youth Commission of the World Council of Churches and of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches. He was elected (with Prases Koch) to be a member of the Ecumenical Christian Council for Life and Work at Fano, Denmark, in 1934.

twentieth century a Christian life should be lived in a spirit of genuine brotherhood, and how such a life could naturally and freely grow if there were only men who entirely belonged to the Lord and, therefore, in brotherly love to one another. It was not until 1940 that the College was finally closed down by the Gestapo.

When war seemed inevitable, Bonhoeffer’s friends wanted him to leave Germany to save his life, for he was unalterably opposed to serving in the Army in an aggressive war. When asked by a Swede at the Ecumenical Conference at Fano, Denmark, in 1934, “What will you do when war comes?” he answered: “I shall pray to Christ to give me the power not to take up arms.” In July 1939, American friends got him out of Germany. But soon he felt that he could not stay there, but that he had to return to his country. When he came to England on his return from the United States, his friends quickly realized that Bonhoeffer’s heart belonged to his oppressed and persecuted fellow Christians in Germany and that he would not desert them at a time when they needed him most.

The reasoning which brought Bonhoeffer to his decision belongs, as Reinhold Niebuhr¹ says, “to the finest logic of Christian martyrdom.” “I shall have no right,” Bonhoeffer wrote to Niebuhr before leaving America, “to participate in the reconstruction of Christian life in Germany after the war if I do not share the trials of this time with my people.

. . . Christians in Germany will face the terrible alternative of either willing the defeat of their nation in order that Christian civilization may survive, or willing the victory of their nation and thereby destroying our civilization. I know which of these alternatives I must choose; but I cannot make this choice in security.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer never regretted this decision, not even in prison, where he wrote in later years: “I am sure of God’s hand and guidance. . . . You must never doubt that I am thankful and glad to go the way which I am being led. My past life is abundantly full of

¹ Niebuhr, *op. cit.*, p. 3. Cf. also Niebuhr, “Death of a Martyr,” in *Christianity and Crisis*, June 25th, 1945.

God’s mercy, and, above all sin, stands the forgiving love of the Crucified.”

At the outbreak of the war friends in Germany managed to spare him the ordeal of serving in the Army, so that he was able to go on with the work for the Confessional Church and to combine it with some activity for the political underground movement to which the war had given its chance. Bonhoeffer, qualified both by character and general outlook, soon belonged to the few who had a strong spiritual influence on the growing opposition in Germany.

Bonhoeffer (together with his sister Christel and her husband, Hans von Dohnanyi) was arrested by the Gestapo in the house of his parents on April 5th, 1943. In prison and

concentration camps, Bonhoeffer greatly inspired by his indomitable courage, his unselfishness and his goodness, all those who came in contact with him. He even inspired his guards with respect, some of whom became so much attached to him that they smuggled out of prison his papers and poems written there, and apologized to him for having to lock his door after the round in the courtyard.

His own concern in prison was to get permission to minister to the sick and to his fellow prisoners, and his ability to comfort the anxious and depressed was amazing. We know what Bonhoeffer's word and religious assistance meant to his fellow prisoners, especially during their last hours (even to Molotov's nephew Kokorin, who was imprisoned with Bonhoeffer in Buchenwald and to whom the teaching of Christ was brought home); we know what Bonhoeffer's practical aid meant in prison (Tegel) during political trials to those men of whom ten or twenty were sentenced to death by a military court every week in 1943 and 1944. Some of these (among them a British soldier), charged with sabotage, were saved by him (and his father and solicitor¹) from certain death. We have heard that his fellow prisoners were deeply impressed by the calmness and self-control which Bonhoeffer displayed even in the most terrible situations. For instance, during the very heavy ¹ **Kurt Wergin, Berlin.**

bombings of Berlin, when the explosions were accompanied by the howling of his fellow prisoners, who beat with their fists against the locked doors of their cells clamouring to be transferred to the safe bunkers, Bonhoeffer stood, we have been told, like a giant before men.

But this is only the one side of the picture. The other side is that Bonhoeffer was a man who lived in, and loved, this world. He, a giant before man, was but a child before God.

While he was in the body, the fight between flesh and spirit, Adam and Christ, was going on in him. Sometimes he seemed to have become a riddle to himself. One day he gave expression to this conflict in his soul in a moving poem written from the prison-cell and entitled—

WHO AM I?¹

Who am I? They often tell me I stepped from my cell's confinement calmly, cheerfully, firmly, like a Squire from his country house.

Who am I? They often tell me I used to speak to my warders freely and friendly and clearly, as though it were mine to command.

Who am I? They also tell me I bore the days of misfortune equably, smilingly, proudly, like one accustomed to win.

Am I then really that which other men tell of?

Or am I only what I myself know of myself?

Restless and longing and sick, like a bird in a cage, struggling for breath, as though hands were compressing my throat,

¹ Translated by J. B. Leishman.

yearning for colours, for flowers, for the voices of birds, thirsting for words of kindness, for neighbourliness, tossing in expectation of great events, powerlessly trembling for friends at an infinite distance, weary and empty at praying, at thinking, at making, faint, and ready to say farewell to it all.

Who am I? This or the Other?

Am I one person to-day and to-morrow another?

Am I both at once? A hypocrite before others,

and before myself a contemptible woe-begone weakling?

Or is something within me still like a beaten army fleeing in disorder from victory already achieved?

Who am I? They mock me, these lonely questions of mine.
Whoever I am, Thou knowest, O God, I am thine!

On October 5th, 1944, Bonhoeffer was transferred from Tegel to the main Gestapo prison in the Prinz Albrechtstrasse in Berlin. Although fully aware of what he had to expect there, he was perfectly calm, saying goodbye to his friends as though nothing had happened, but, as a fellow prisoner remarked, "his eyes were quite unnatural." The direct contact hitherto maintained with the outside world was now cut. The only and last message received from him was a poem composed at the Gestapo prison in Berlin during the very heavy air raids on Berlin. It was entitled "New Year 1945" and reads as follows:¹

With every power for good to stay and guide me, comforted
and inspired beyond all fear,

I'll live these days with you in thought beside me, and pass,
with you, into the coming year.

The old year still torments our hearts, unhastening: the long
days of our sorrow still endure.

Father, grant to the souls thou hast been chastening that
thou hast promised—the healing and the cure.

¹ Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop Young.

Should it be ours to drain the cup of grieving even to the dregs of pain, at thy command, we will not falter, thankfully receiving all that is given by thy loving hand.

But, should it be thy will once more to release us to life's enjoyment and its good sunshine, that we've learned from sorrow shall increase us and all our life be dedicate as thine.

To-day, let candles shed their radiant greeting: lo, on our darkness are they not thy light, leading us haply to our longed-for meeting?

Thou canst illumine e'en our darkest night.

When now the silence deepens for our harkening, grant we may hear thy children's voices raise from all the unseen world around us darkening their universal paeon, in thy praise.

While all the powers of Good aid and attend us, boldly we'll face the future, be it what may.

At even, and at morn, God will befriend us,

And oh, most surely on each new year's day!

In February, when the Gestapo prison in Berlin was destroyed by an air raid, Bonhoeffer was taken to the concentration camp of Buchenwald and from there to other places until he was executed by special order of Himmler at the concentration camp at Flossenbourg on April 9th, 1945, just a few days before it was liberated by the Allies. This happened just about the time when his brother Klaus and his sisters' husbands, Hans von Dohnanyi and Rudiger Schleicher, met their execution at the hands of the Gestapo in Berlin and in the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen.

The guiding force in Bonhoeffer's life, underlying all that he did, worked and suffered for, was his faith and love of God, in whom he found peace and happiness. From his faith the breath of vision came which enabled him to separate the gold in life from the dross and to differentiate what was and what was not essential in the life of man. From it came the constancy of mind, persistency of purpose, love of suffering humanity and of truth, justice and goodness. But it was not enough for him to seek justice, truth, honesty and goodness for their own sake and patiently to suffer for them. No, according to Bonhoeffer, we have to do so in loyal obedience to Him who is the source and spring of all goodness, justice and truth and on whom he felt absolutely dependent.

It is the same call of God which also obliges us only to make use of freedom with a deep feeling of responsibility. Bonhoeffer believed in man as a free spiritual being, but this freedom was conferred and inspired by divine grace and granted man, not for his glorification, but for the conservation of the divine ordering of human life. If Christian teaching does not guide us in the use of freedom and God is denied, all obligations and responsibilities that are sacred and binding on man are undermined. A Christian has then no other choice but to act, to suffer and—if it has to be—to die. As he put it in his poem, "Stations on the Road to Freedom," composed in prison when he realized that his death was certain, the last verse of which runs as follows:

DEATH¹

Come now, solemnest feast on the road to eternal freedom,
Death, and destroy those fetters that bow, those walls that
imprison

this our transient life, these souls that linger in darkness, so that at last we see what is here withheld from our vision. Long did we seek you, freedom, in discipline, action and suffering

Now that we die, in the face of God himself we behold you.

¹ Translation by J. B. Leishman.

It was his brotherly love of his fellow-men which also caused Bonhoeffer to believe that it was not enough to follow Christ by preaching, teaching and writing. No, he was in deadly earnest when he called for Christian action and self-sacrifice. This explains why Bonhoeffer always acted spontaneously, “in hiding,” far from all publicity, and why he considered self-righteousness and complacency great sins against the Holy Spirit, and regarded ambition and vanity as the start of the road to hell.

Bonhoeffer stood for what is called Christian Humanism today. For he offered his life for a new understanding of the personal life which has its roots in the Christian faith. It was he who made true the word that “the spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord” (Prov. xx. 27) and that God’s revelation is through man and for man only. To Bonhoeffer, Christianity was not the concern of the believing, pious soul who shuts himself up and keeps himself within the bounds of the sacramental sphere. No, according to him Christianity has its place in this world and the Church as the Body of Christ, and the fellowship in Him can only be the visible Church. Man must follow Him who has served and passed through this world as the living, the dying and the risen Lord. Therefore, wherever it pleases God to put man in this world, the Christian must be ready for martyrdom and death. It is only in this way that man learns faith.

As he himself has put it: “The Christian is not a *homo religiosus*, but simply a man as Jesus (in distinction from John the Baptist) was a man. . . . Not the flat and banal ‘This-sidedness’ of the Enlightened, of the Active, of the Comfortable and the Sluggard, but the deep ‘This-sidedness’ which is full of discipline and in which the knowledge of the Death and Resurrection is always present, this it is that I mean.¹ ‘When a man really gives up trying to make something out of himself—a saint, or a converted sinner, or a churchman (a so-called clerical somebody), a righteous or unrighteous man, . . . when in the fullness of tasks, questions, success

¹ On the term “this-sidedness” see Schonherr, “Die Zeichen der Zeit,” *Evangelische Monatsschrift*, 1947, pp. 307-12.

or ill-hap, experiences and perplexities, a man throws himself into the arms of God . . . then he wakes with Christ in Gethsemane. That is faith, that is *metanoia* and it is thus that he becomes a man and Christian. How can a man wax arrogant if in a this-sided life he shares the suffering of God?”¹

The idea that God Himself has been suffering through Christ in this world and from its remoteness from Him, had occupied Bonhoeffer’s mind again and again. Bonhoeffer frequently felt strongly that God Himself shared his suffering. In the second verse of the poem “Christian and Unbeliever,” composed by Bonhoeffer a few months before his death, this feeling is expressed as follows:

Men go to God when he is sore bested: find him poor and scorned, without shelter and bread, whelmed under weight of the wicked, the weak, the dead. Christians stand by God in his hour of grieving.²

Bonhoeffer's standing with God in His hour of grieving explains, ultimately, why he did not take his own suffering seriously and why his courage was so great and uncompromising.

This steadfastness of mind and preparedness to sacrifice everything has been proved on many occasions. For instance, when in the summer of 1940 despair had seized most of those who were actively hostile to the Nazi regime and when the proposal was made that further action should be postponed so as to avoid giving Hitler the air of a martyr, Bonhoeffer unswervingly and successfully opposed this suggestion: "If we claim to be Christians, there is no room for expediency." Thus the group led by him went on with its activities at a time when the world inside and outside Germany widely believed in a Nazi victory. Or when the question arose as to who was prepared to inform the British Government, through the Bishop of Chichester, of the exact details of the

¹ The full text in German can be found in *Das Zeugnis eines Boten*, ed. by Visser 't Hooft, Geneva, 1945, pp. 46-7.

² Translated by Geoffrey Winthrop Young.

German resistance movement, it was again Bonhoeffer who, as early as June 1942, at the risk of his life, undertook this task at the instigation of his brother-in-law Hans von Dohnanyi in the hope of a sympathetic understanding on the part of the British Government.¹

Further, in his hearing before the Gestapo during his imprisonment, defenceless and powerless as he then was and only fortified by the word of God in his heart, he stood erect and unbroken before his tormentors. He refused to

recant, and defied the Gestapo machine by openly admitting that, as a Christian, he was an implacable enemy of National Socialism and its totalitarian demands towards the citizen— defied it, although he was continually threatened with torture and with the arrest of his parents, his sisters and his fiancée, who all had a helping hand in his activities. We know of another scene in October 1944, when friends made an attempt to liberate him and to take him to safety abroad, and he decided to remain in prison in order not to endanger others.

We also know from the testimony of a British officer, a fellow prisoner, of the last service which Dietrich Bonhoeffer held on the day before his death and which “moved all deeply, Catholics and Protestants alike, by his simple sincerity.” When trying afterwards to keep the imprisoned wives of men executed for their leadership in the plot against Hitler from depression and anxiety, he was taken away. We know that Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who was never tried, went steadfastly on his last way to be hanged, and died with admirable calmness and dignity.

God had heard his prayer and granted him the “costly grace”—that is, the privilege of taking the cross for others and of affirming his faith by martyrdom.

4

Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s life and work has far-reaching

¹ The Bishop of Chichester tells us of his conversations in Sweden with Bonhoeffer in an article published in the *Contemporary Review*, 1945, No. 958, pp. 203 ff.

implications. First, Bonhoeffer's and his friends' political activities show that the still widely-held view that the plot of July 1944 was simply a "conspiracy of a small clique of reactionaries and discouraged officers", who saw that Hitler was losing the war and had made a mess of their profession, is wrong. There also was in the German opposition movement another strand of uncorrupted spiritual forces which opposed all that Hitler and National Socialism stood for on grounds of Christianity and the basic values of life, of truth, justice, goodness and decency. This trend drew its members from quite different political parties and religious groups. None of these men stood for a special party belief, but for a certain way of life, the destruction of which was the avowed purpose of National Socialism. Here there was the "other Germany" of which there was so much talk in the 'thirties. These men were in truth the upholders of the European and Western tradition in Germany, and it was Dietrich Bonhoeffer who more than anybody else realized that nothing less than a return to the Christian faith could save Germany. The failure of these men was not only a tragedy for Germany, but for Europe as a whole, and historians may well come one day to the conclusion that the consequences of this failure cannot be made good.

The existence of this strand within the German opposition movement confirms that the last war was, ultimately, ideological in its basic character and that we are living today in a primarily ideological age. Only thus can we fully understand the motives of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's action. No doubt, Bonhoeffer was a great patriot¹ and he loved his country so much that he preferred death to safety. But he was also too astute a political analyst not to see that Germany would be engulfed in the coming catastrophe. The fanatical devilish forces within National Socialism left no alternative. They were aiming at the destruction of Germany as a European and Christian country. By planned political

action he hoped to avoid this tragic disaster. As he used to say: it is not only

¹ On Bonhoeffer's patriotism, cf. E. Bethge in *Die Schdpfung*, 1946-73 PP- 19-20.

my task to look after the victims of madmen who drive a motor-car in a crowded street, but to do all in my power to stop their driving at all.

Ultimately, it was the allegiance which he owed to God and his master which forced upon him the terrible decision, not merely to make a stand against National Socialism (all the underground movements in the German-occupied countries did that), but also—and this in contradistinction to all the underground movements which appealed to nationalism—to work for the defeat of his own country, since only thus could Germany as a Christian and European country be saved from extinction. For this very reason Bonhoeffer and his friends were tortured, hanged and murdered. It was Bonhoeffer and his friends who proved by their resistance unto death that even in the age of the nation-state there are loyalties which transcend those to state and nation. They proved that even in this age nationalism stands under God and that it is a sin against Him and His call for fellowship with other nations if it degenerates into national egotism and greed. This message, which implies the virtual death sentence of the still prevailing materialistic concept of nationalism, belongs to the spiritual inheritance of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's and his friends' martyrdom. Only from this point of view can it be proved that Hitler and his gang were not only the destroyers of Europe but also traitors to, and Quislings of, their own country; and, further, that men can lose their country if it is represented by an anti-Christian regime.

True, it cannot be said that the war had actually been waged by the Western countries on these ideological lines. We know that in the later stage of the war, when the regrettable “unconditional surrender” policy of Casablanca was accepted by the Western countries, the war had gradually lost its ideological character and taken on a more and more nationalistic outlook. This was due to the fact that the West and its political leaders were, ultimately, not confronted with the tragic conflict of loyalties to which Christians in Germany were exposed. Of course, there were in the Western countries outstanding Christians and non-Christians who felt this conflict weighing heavily on their conscience and their thought and courageously refused during the war to bow down to public opinion.¹ These men raised the claims of a higher loyalty than the national, and challenged politicians and churchmen alike. But they have not experienced the full weight of the tragic issue at stake. Only those who paid with their lives for the tragic conflict of loyalties can claim to be the martyrs of a new age.

5

Secondly, the religious implications concern the Protestant Church in Germany especially, but also affect the Church as a whole.

In the earlier stages of his career Bonhoeffer accepted the traditional Lutheran view that there was a sharp distinction between politics and religion. Gradually, however, he revised his opinion, not because he was a politician or because he refused to give Caesar his due, but because he came to recognize that the political authority in Germany had become entirely corrupt and immoral and that a false faith is capable of terrible and monstrous things. For Bonhoeffer Hitler was the Antichrist, the arch-destroyer of the world and its basic values, the Antichrist who enjoys

destruction, slavery, death and extinction for their own sake, the Antichrist who wants to pose the negative as positive and as creative.

Bonhoeffer was firmly and rightly convinced that it is not only a Christian right but a Christian duty towards God to oppose tyranny, that is, a government which is no longer based on natural law and the law of God. For Bonhoeffer this followed from the fact that the Church as a living force in this world entirely depends on her *this-sidedness*. Of course,

¹ Cf., for instance, the speeches delivered by the Bishop of Chichester in the House of Lords during the war, his essays and addresses which are now embodied in his book, *The Church and Humanity*, 1939-1946 (1947)-

Bonhoeffer understood this term neither in the sense of modern liberal theology nor in the sense of the National Socialist creed. Both modern liberal theology and secular totalitarianism hold pretty much in common that the message of the Bible has to be adapted, more or less, to the requirements of a secular world. No wonder, therefore, that the process of debasing Christianity as inaugurated by liberal theology led, in the long run, to a complete perversion and falsification of the essence of Christian teaching by National Socialism. Bonhoeffer was firmly convinced that “this side” must be fully related to, and permeated by, Christian love, and that the Christian must be prepared, if necessary, to offer his life for this. Thus all kinds of secular totalitarianism which force man to cast aside his religious and moral obligations to God and subordinate the laws of justice and morality to the State are incompatible with his conception of life.

This explains why Bonhoeffer did not take the pacifist line, although his aristocratic noble-mindedness and charming gentleness made him, at the bottom of his heart, a pacifist. But to refrain from taking any part in the attempt to overcome the National Socialist regime conflicted too deeply with his view that Christian principles must in some way be translated into human life and that it is in the sphere of the material, in state and society, that responsible love has to be manifested.

Again, it was typical of Bonhoeffer that he did not commit the Church by his actions. The responsibility was his and not that of the Church, and therefore he cannot, alas, be said to have represented by his action the Confessional Church as a whole. True, the Barmen Declaration had committed the Church to action in the political as well as in the religious sphere, and Bonhoeffer left no doubt that deciding for or against Barmen was deciding for or against the Confessional Church in Nazi Germany. As he once said: "He who severs himself from the Confessional Church severs himself from the Grace of God." But there were only a few of its members who took the Barmen message so seriously that they were prepared courageously to act upon the practical consequences of their conclusions. Therefore we cannot be surprised that Bonhoeffer was filled with increasing sorrow about the course the Confessional Church took in the later years of the National Socialist regime. He felt that the Confessional Church was more concerned with her own existence and inherited rights than with preaching against the war and with the fate of the persecuted and oppressed. Thus it was Bonhoeffer who first brought home the full lesson of the Oxford Conference to the Lutheran Church in Germany, namely, that the life of the Church must be linked with the life of the people. This is the deeper meaning of Bonhoeffer's martyrdom and death for the Protestant

Church in Germany. Her future depends upon her right understanding of them.

6

Those who attended the service held at Holy Trinity in London at the instigation of the Bishop of Chichester on July 27th, 1945,¹ felt that, on April 9th, 1945, when Dietrich Bonhoeffer met his death at the hands of the S.S. Black Guards, something had happened in Germany that could not be measured by human standards. They felt that God Himself had intervened in the most terrible struggle the world has witnessed so far by sacrificing one of His most faithful and courageous sons to expiate the crimes of a diabolical regime and to revive the spirit in which the civilization of Europe has to be rebuilt.

Indeed, if self-sacrifice is the highest fulfilment of the human being, and if the value of man with his bodily existence depends on the measure of sacrifice he is called to exercise for the sake of responsible love in the material environment in which he has been set, then Bonhoeffer's life and death belong to the annals of Christian martyrdom, or, as Niebuhr said, "to the modern Acts of the Apostles." His good fight has been a living symbol that the spiritual has

¹ Cf. Bonhoeffer, *Gedenkheft*, Berlin, 1947. Another memorial service was held at Berlin on April 9th, 1946; cf. *op. cit.*, pp. 18-36.

the primacy over the material. His story has become the story of the victory of the spirit of the loving and truly human person over evil, evil which was not able to break the last stronghold of responsible spiritual freedom. "The life of the spirit is not that which shuns death and keeps clear of destruction: rather it endureth death and in death it is

sustained. It only achieves its truth in the midst of utter destruction.”

It has often been said that those of the many who are not directly guilty for the crimes of the former regime in Germany must be punished for their passive attitude towards it. In a modern dictatorship, however, with its subterranean ubiquity and all-embracing instruments of oppression, a revolt means certain death to all who support it. To reproach in a modern tyranny a people as a whole for failing to revolt is as if one would reproach a prisoner for failing to escape from a heavily guarded prison. The majority of the people in all nations alike does not consist of heroes. What Dietrich Bonhoeffer and others did cannot be expected from the many. The future in modern society depends much more on the quiet heroism of the very few who are inspired by Him. These few will greatly enjoy the divine inspiration and will be prepared to stand for the dignity of man and true freedom and to keep the law of God, even if it means martyrdom or death. These few perform the law because they “look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things that are unseen are eternal.”

Bonhoeffer often asked himself about the deeper meaning of his life, which seemed to him so disconnected and confused. A few months before his death, when coming events cast their shadows before, he wrote in prison: “It all depends on whether or not the fragment of our life reveals the plan and material of the whole. There are fragments which are only good to be thrown away, and others which are important for centuries to come because their fulfilment can only be a divine work. They are fragments of necessity. If our life, however remotely, reflects such a fragment... we shall not have to bewail our fragmentary life, but, on the contrary, rejoice in it.”

Indeed, we have to rejoice in God's mercy. We have not found Dietrich Bonhoeffer's grave, but the memory of his life will safely be guarded, not only in the hearts of those who are indissolubly united with him, but also in the heart of the Church who draws her life-blood again and again from those who "follow Him."

Beyond that we know that the time will come when we shall have to realize that we owe it to the inspiration of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life and death, and of those who died with him, that Western civilization can be saved. For not only in its material standards, but also in its spiritual vitality, has Western civilization been falling steadily and with increasing rapidity into ruin and desolation. The good message of Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life and death is that Western civilization must not die. It will be born again to youth. It has already recaptured faith and vitality. What was said of Moses as he went to his death, "And the Lord showed him all the land" (Deut. xxxiv. i), applies to Bonhoeffer and to those who have given their lives for the new humanity which will arise through their martyrdom.

Thus Bonhoeffer's life and death have given us great hope for the future. He has set a model for a new type of true leadership inspired by the Gospel, daily ready for martyrdom and death and imbued by a new spirit of Christian humanism and a creative sense of civic duty. The victory which he has won was a victory for us all, a conquest never to be undone, of love, light and liberty.

INTRODUCTION

Revival of Church life always brings in its train a richer understanding of the scriptures. Behind all the slogans and catchwords of ecclesiastical controversy, necessary though they are, there arises a more determined quest for Him who

is the sole object of it all, for Jesus Christ Himself. What did Jesus mean to say to us? What is His will for us to-day? How can He help us to be good Christians in the modern world? In the last resort, what we want to know is not, what would this or that man, or this or that Church, have of us, but what Jesus Christ Himself wants of us. When we go to Church and listen to the sermon, what we want to hear is *His* word—and that not merely for selfish reasons, but for the sake of the unchurched masses who are deaf to the message of the Church. We have a strange feeling that if Jesus Himself—Jesus alone with His word— could come into our midst at sermon time, we should find quite a different set of men hearing the word, and quite a different set rejecting it. That is not to deny that the word of God is to be heard in the preaching which goes on in our Church. The real trouble is that the pure word of Jesus has been overlaid with so much human ballast—burdensome rules and regulations, false hopes and consolations—that it has become extremely difficult to make a genuine decision for Christ. Of course it is our aim to preach Christ and Christ alone, but, when all is said and done, it is not the fault of our critics that they find our preaching so hard to understand, so overburdened with ideas and expressions which are hopelessly out of touch with the mental climate in which they live. It is just not true that every word of criticism directed against contemporary preaching is a deliberate rejection of Christianity and proceeds from the spirit of

Antichrist. So many people come to Church with a genuine desire to hear what we have to say, yet they are always going back home with the uncomfortable feeling that we are making it too difficult for them to come to Jesus. Are we determined to have nothing to do with all these people? They are convinced that it is not the word of Jesus Himself that puts them off, but the superstructure of human, institutional, and doctrinal elements in our preaching. Of

course we know all the answers to these objections, and those answers certainly make it easy for us to slide out of our responsibilities. But perhaps it would be just as well to ask ourselves whether we do not in fact often act as obstacles to Jesus and His word. Is it not possible that we cling too closely to our own favourite presentation of the gospel, and to a type of preaching which was all very well in its own time and place and for the social set-up for which it was originally intended? Is there not after all an element of truth in the contention that our preaching is too dogmatic, and hopelessly irrelevant to life? Are we not constantly harping on certain ideas at the expense of others which are just as important? Does not our preaching contain too much of our own opinions and convictions, and too little of Jesus Christ? Jesus invites all those that labour and are heavy laden, and nothing could be so contrary to our best intentions, and so fatal to our proclamation, as to drive men away from Him by forcing upon them man-made dogmas. If we did so, we should make the love of Jesus Christ a laughing-stock to Christians and pagans alike. It is no use taking refuge in abstract discussion, or trying to make excuses, so let us get back to the scriptures, to the word and call of Jesus Christ Himself. Let us try to get away from the poverty and pettiness of our own little convictions and problems, and seek the wealth and splendour which are vouchsafed to us in Jesus Christ.

We propose to tell how Jesus calls us to be His disciples. But is not this to lay another and still heavier burden on men's shoulders? Is this all we can do when the souls and bodies of men are groaning beneath the weight of so many man-made dogmas? If we recall men to the following of

Jesus, shall we not be driving a still sharper goad into their already troubled and wounded consciences? Are we to follow the practice which has been all too common in the history of

the Church, and impose on men demands too grievous to bear, demands which have little to do with the centralities of the Christian faith, demands which may be a pious luxury for the few, but which the toiling masses, with their anxiety for their daily bread, their jobs and their families, can only reject as utter blasphemy and a tempting of God? Is it the Church's concern to erect a spiritual tyranny over men, by dictating to them what must be believed and performed in order to be saved, and by presuming to enforce that belief and behaviour with the sanctions of temporal and eternal punishment? Shall the word of the Church bring new tyranny and oppression over the souls of men? It may well be that this is what many people want. But could the Church consent to meet such a demand?

When the Bible speaks of following Jesus, it is proclaiming a discipleship which will liberate mankind from all man-made dogmas, from every burden and oppression, from every anxiety and torture which afflicts the conscience. If they follow Jesus, men escape from the hard yoke of their own laws, and submit to the kindly yoke of Jesus Christ. But does this mean that we ignore the seriousness of His commands? Far from it. We can only achieve perfect liberty and enjoy fellowship with Jesus when His command, His call to absolute discipleship, is appreciated in its entirety. Only the man who follows the command of Jesus without reserve, and submits unresistingly to His yoke, finds His burden easy, and under its gentle pressure receives the power to persevere in the right way. The command of Jesus is hard, unutterably hard, for those who try to resist it. But for those who willingly submit, the yoke is easy, and the burden is light. "His commandments are not grievous" (1 John V. 3). The commandment of Jesus is not a sort of spiritual shock treatment. Jesus asks nothing of us without giving us the strength to perform it. His commandment never seeks to destroy life, but to foster, strengthen and heal it. But one

question still troubles us. What can the call to discipleship mean to-day for the worker, the business man, the squire and the soldier? Does it not lead to an intolerable dichotomy between our lives as workers in the world and our lives as Christians? If Christianity means following Christ, is it not a religion for a small minority, a spiritual elite? Does it not mean the repudiation of the great mass of society, and a hearty contempt for the weak and the poor? Yet surely such an attitude is the exact opposite of the gracious mercy of Jesus Christ, who came to the publicans and sinners, the weak and the poor, the erring and the hopeless? Are those who belong to Jesus only a few, or are they many? He died on the cross alone, abandoned by His disciples. With Him were crucified, not two of His followers, but two murderers. But they all stood beneath the cross, enemies and believers, doubters and cowards, revilers and devoted followers. His prayer, "Father, forgive them" was meant for them all, and for all their sins. The mercy and love of God are at work even in the midst of His enemies. It is the same Jesus Christ, who of His grace calls us to follow Him, and whose grace saves the murderer who mocks Him on the cross in His last hour.

And if we answer the call to discipleship, where will it lead us? What decisions and partings will it demand? To answer this question we shall have to go to Him, for only He knows the answer. Only Jesus Christ, who bids us follow Him, knows the journey's end. But we do know that it will be a road of boundless mercy. Discipleship means joy.

In the modern world it seems so difficult to walk with absolute certainty in the narrow way of ecclesiastical obedience and yet remain in the broad open spaces of the universal love of Christ, of the patience, mercy and "philanthropy" of the love of God for the weak and the ungodly. Yet somehow or other we must combine the two, or else we shall follow the paths of men. May God grant us joy

as we strive earnestly to follow the way of discipleship. May we be enabled to say “No” to sin and “Yes” to the sinner. May we withstand our foes, and yet hold out to them the word of the gospel which woos and wins the souls of men. “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

I. Costly Grace

CHEAP GRACE IS THE DEADLY ENEMY OF OUR CHURCH. WE ARE FIGHTING TO-DAY FOR COSTLY GRACE.

Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheap-jack’s wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church’s inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price, grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?

Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian “conception” of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins. The Church which holds the correct doctrine of grace has, it is supposed, *ipso facto* a part in that grace. In Such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace

therefore amounts to a denial of the living word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Son of God.

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything, they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. "All for sin could not atone." The world goes on in the same old way, and we are still sinners "even in the best life" as Luther said. Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every

sphere of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin. That was the heresy of the enthusiasts, the Anabaptists and their kind. Let the Christian beware of rebelling against the free and boundless grace of God and desecrating it. Let him not attempt to erect a new religion of the letter by endeavouring to live a life of obedience to the commandments of Jesus Christ! The world has been justified by grace. The Christian knows that, and takes it seriously. He knows he must not strive against this indispensable grace. Therefore—let him live like the rest of the world! Of course we would like to go and do something extraordinary, and it does demand a good deal of self-restraint to refrain from the attempt and content ourselves with living as the world lives. Yet it is imperative for the Christian to achieve this renunciation and self-effacement. He must let grace be grace indeed, otherwise he will destroy the world's faith in the free gift of grace. Let the Christian rest content with his worldliness and with this renunciation of any higher standard than the world. He is doing it for the sake of the world rather than for the sake of grace. Let him be comforted and rest assured in his possession of this grace—for grace alone does everything. Instead of following Christ, let the Christian enjoy the consolations of His grace! That is what we mean by cheap grace, the grace which amounts to the justification of sin

without the justification of the repentant sinner who departs from sin and from whom sin departs. Cheap grace is not the kind of forgiveness of sin which frees us from the toils of sin. Cheap grace is the grace we bestow on ourselves.

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without contrition. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the Cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble, it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows Him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be *sought* again and again, the gift which must be *asked* for, the door at which a man must *knock*.

Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is *costly* because it cost God the life of His Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is *grace* because God did not reckon His Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered Him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

Costly grace is the sanctuary of God; it has to be protected from the world, and not thrown to the dogs. It is therefore the living word, the word of God, which He speaks as it pleases Him. Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus, it comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow Him; it is grace because Jesus says: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light."

On two separate occasions Peter received the call, "Follow me." It was the first and last word Jesus spoke to His disciple (Mark i. 17; John xxi. 22). A whole life lies between these two calls. The first occasion was by the lake of Gennesareth, when Peter left his nets and his craft and followed Jesus at His word. The second occasion is when the Risen Lord finds him back again at his old trade. Once again it is by the lake of Gennesareth, and once again the call is: "Follow me." Between the two calls lay a whole life of discipleship in the following of Christ. Halfway between them comes Peter's confession, when he acknowledged Jesus as the Christ of God. Three times Peter hears the same proclamation that Christ is his Lord and God—at the beginning, at the end, and at Caesarea Philippi. Each time it is the same grace of Christ calling Peter to follow, and revealing itself to him in his confession.

This grace was certainly not self-bestowed. It was the grace of Christ Himself, now prevailing upon the disciple to leave all and follow Him, now working in him that confession which to the world must sound like the ultimate blasphemy, now inviting Peter to the supreme fellowship of martyrdom for the Lord he had denied, and thereby forgiving him all his sins. In the life of Peter grace and discipleship are inseparable. He had received the grace which costs.

As Christianity spread, and the Church became more secularized, this realization of the costliness of grace gradually faded. The world was christianized, and grace became its common property. It was to be had at low cost. Yet the Church of Rome did not altogether lose the earlier vision. It is highly significant that the Church was astute enough to find room for the monastic movement, and to prevent it from lapsing into schism. Here on the outer fringe was a place where the older vision was kept alive. Here men still remembered that grace costs, that grace means following Christ. Here they left all they had for Christ's sake, and endeavoured daily to practise His rigorous commands. Thus monasticism became a living protest against the secularization of Christianity and the cheapening of grace. But the Church was wise enough to tolerate this protest, and to prevent it from developing to its logical conclusion. It thus succeeded in relativizing it, even using it in order to justify the secularization of its own life. Monasticism was represented as an individual achievement which the mass of the laity could not be expected to emulate. By thus limiting the application of the commandments of Jesus to a restricted group of specialists, the Church evolved the fatal conception of the double standard—a maximum and a minimum standard of Christian obedience. Whenever the Church was accused of being too secularized, it could always point to monasticism as an opportunity of living a higher life within the fold, and thus justify the other possibility of a lower standard of life for others. And so we get the paradoxical result that mon-asticism, whose mission was to preserve in the Church of Rome the primitive Christian realization of the costliness of grace, afforded conclusive justification for the secularization of the Church. By and large, the fatal error of monasti-cism lay not so much in its rigorism (though even here there was a good deal of misunderstanding of the precise content of the will of Jesus) as in the extent to which it departed from genuine Christianity by setting up itself as

the individual achievement of a select few, and so claiming a special merit of its own.

When the Reformation came, the providence of God raised Martin Luther to restore the gospel of pure, costly grace. Luther passed through the cloister; he was a monk, and all this was part of the divine plan. Luther had left all to follow Christ on the path of absolute obedience. He had renounced the world in order to live the Christian life. He had learnt obedience to Christ and to His Church, because only he who is obedient can believe. The call to the cloister demanded of Luther the complete surrender of his life. But God shattered all his hopes. He showed him through the scriptures that the following of Christ is not the achievement or merit of a select few, but an obligation laid on all Christians without distinction. Monasticism had transformed the humble work of discipleship into the meritorious activity of the saints, and the self-renunciation of discipleship into the flagrant spiritual self-assertion of the "religious." The world had crept into the very heart of the monastic life, and was once more making havoc. The monk's attempt to flee from the world turned out to be a subtle form of love for the world. The bottom having thus been knocked out of the religious life, Luther laid hold upon grace. Just as the whole world of monasticism was crashing about him in ruins, he saw God in Christ stretching forth His hand to save. He grasped that hand in faith, believing that "after all, nothing we can do is of any avail, however good a life we live." The grace which gave itself to him was a costly grace, and it shattered his whole existence. Once more he must leave his nets and follow. The first time was when he entered the monastery, when he had left everything behind except his pious self. This time even that was taken from him. He obeyed the call, not through any merit of his own, but simply through the grace of God. Luther did not hear the word: "Of course you have sinned, but now everything is forgiven, so you can stay

as you are and enjoy the consolations of forgiveness.” No, Luther had to leave the cloister and go back to the world, not because the world in itself was good and holy, but because even the cloister was only a part of the world.

Luther’s return from the cloister to the world was the worst blow the world had suffered since the days of early Christianity. The renunciation he made when he became a monk was child’s play compared with that which he had to make when he returned to the world. Now came the frontal assault. The only way to follow Jesus was by living in the world. Hitherto the Christian life had been the achievement of a few choice spirits under the exceptionally favourable conditions of monasticism; now it is a duty laid on every Christian living in the world. The commandment of Jesus must be accorded perfect obedience in daily life and work. The conflict between the life of the Christian and the life of the world was thus thrown into the sharpest possible relief. It was a hand-to-hand conflict between the Christian and the world.

It is a fatal misunderstanding of Luther’s action to suppose that his rediscovery of the gospel of pure grace offered a general dispensation from obedience to the command of Jesus, or that it was the great discovery of the Reformation that God’s forgiving grace automatically conferred upon the world both righteousness and holiness. On the contrary, for Luther the Christian’s worldly calling is sanctified only in so far as that calling registers the final, radical protest against the world. Only in so far as the Christian’s secular calling is exercised in the following of Jesus does it receive from the gospel new sanction and justification. It was not the justification of sin, out the justification of the sinner that drove Luther from the cloister back into the world. The grace he had received was costly grace. It was grace, for it was iike water on parche'd ground, comfort in tribulation, freedom

from the bondage of a self-chosen way, and forgiveness of all his sins. And it was costly, for, so far from dispensing him from good works, it meant that he must take the call to discipleship more seriously than ever before. It was grace because it cost so much, and it cost so much because it was grace. That was the secret of the gospel of the Reformation—the justification of the sinner.

Yet the outcome of the Reformation was the victory, not of Luther's perception of grace in all its purity and costliness, but of the vigilant religious instinct of man for the place where grace is to be obtained at the cheapest price. All that was needed was a subtle and almost imperceptible change of emphasis, and the damage was done. Luther had taught that man cannot stand before God, however religious his works and ways may be, because at bottom he is always seeking his own interests. In the depth of his misery, Luther had grasped by faith the free and unconditional forgiveness of all his sins. That experience taught him that this grace had cost him his very life, and must continue to cost him the same price day by day. So far from dispensing him from discipleship, this grace only made him a more earnest disciple. When he spoke of grace, Luther always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was now for the first time subjected to the absolute obedience of Christ. Only so could he speak of grace. Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship. There was no need for Luther always to mention that corollary explicitly, for he always spoke as one who had been led by grace to the strictest following of Christ. Judged by the standard of Luther's doctrine, that of his followers was unassailable, and yet their orthodoxy spelt the end and destruction of the Reformation as the revelation on earth of the costly grace of

God. The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship.

Luther had said that all we can do is of no avail, however good a life we live. He had said that nothing can avail us in the sight of God but “the grace and favour which confers the forgiveness of sin.” But he spoke as one who knew that at the very moment of his crisis he was called to leave all that he had a second time and follow Jesus. The recognition of grace was his final, radical breach with his besetting sin, but it was never the justification of that sin. By laying hold of God’s forgiveness, he made the final, radical renunciation of a self-willed life, and this breach was such that it led inevitably to a serious following of Christ. He always looked upon it as the answer to a sum, but an answer which had been arrived at by God, not by man. But then his followers changed the “answer” into the data for a calculation of their own. That was the root of the trouble. If grace is God’s answer, the gift of Christian life, then we cannot for a moment dispense with following Christ. But if grace is the data for my Christian life, it means that I set out to live the Christian life in the world with all my sins justified beforehand. I can go and sin as much as I like, and rely on this grace to forgive me, for after all the world is justified in principle by grace. I can therefore cling to my bourgeois secular existence, and remain as I was before, but with the added assurance that the grace of God will cover me. It is under the influence of this kind of “grace” that the world has been made “Christian,” but at the cost of secularizing the Christian religion as never before. The antithesis between the Christian life and the life of bourgeois respectability is at an end. The Christian life comes to mean nothing more than living in the world and as the world, in being no different from the world, in fact, in being prohibited from being different from the world for the sake of grace. The upshot of

it all is that my only duty as a Christian is to escape from the world for an hour or so on a Sunday morning and go to Church to be assured that my sins are all forgiven. I need no longer try to follow Christ, for cheap grace, the bitterest foe of all true discipleship, has freed me from that. Grace as the data for our calculations means grace at the cheapest price, but grace as the answer to the sum means costly grace. It is terrifying to realize what use can be made of a genuine evangelical doctrine. In both cases we have the identical formula—"justification by faith alone." Yet the misuse of the formula leads to the complete destruction of its very essence.

At the end of a life spent in the pursuit of knowledge Faust has to confess:

"I now do see that we can nothing know."

That is the answer to a sum, it is the outcome of a long experience. But as Kierkegaard observed, it is quite a different thing when a freshman comes up to the University and uses the same sentiment to justify his indolence. As the answer to a sum it is perfectly true, but as the initial data it is a piece of self-deception. For acquired knowledge cannot be divorced from the existence in which it is acquired. The only man who has the right to say that he is justified by grace alone is the man who has left all to follow Christ. Such a man knows that the call to discipleship is a gift of grace, and that the call is inseparable from the grace. But those who try to use this grace as a dispensation from following Christ are simply deceiving themselves.

But, we may ask, did not Luther himself come perilously near to this perversion of the truth? What about his *Pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide et gaude in Christo* ("Sin boldly, but believe and rejoice in Christ more boldly still")? You are a

sinner, anyway, and there is nothing you can do about it. Whether you are a monk or a man of the world, a religious man or a bad one, you can never escape the toils of the world. So make a bold face of it, and all the more because you can rely on the *opus operatum* of grace. Is this the proclamation of cheap grace, naked and unashamed, the *carte blanche* for sin, the end of all discipleship? Is this a blasphemous encouragement to sin boldly and rely on the grace—which

God has given? Is not the Roman Catechism quite right in denouncing this as the sin against the Holy Ghost?

If we are to understand this saying of Luther's, everything depends on applying the distinction between the data and the answer to the sum. If we make Luther's formula a premiss for our doctrine of grace, we are conjuring up the spectre of cheap grace. But Luther's formula is meant to be taken, not as the premiss, but as the conclusion, the answer to the sum, the coping-stone, his very last word on the subject. Taken as the premiss, *pecca for titer* acquires the character of an ethical principle, and that principle must have a corresponding principle of grace. That means the justification of sin, and it turns Luther's formula into its very opposite. For Luther "sin boldly" could only be his very last refuge, the consolation for one whose attempts to follow Christ had taught him that he can never become sinless, who in his fear of sin despairs of the grace of God. For before that grace we are always and in every circumstance sinners, but that grace seeks us and justifies us, sinners though we are. Take courage and confess your sin, says Luther, do not try to run away from it, but believe more boldly still. You are a sinner, so be a sinner, and don't try to become what you are not. Yes, and become a sinner again and again every day, and be bold about it. But to whom can such words be addressed, except to those who from the bottom of their

hearts make a daily renunciation of sin and of every barrier which hinders them from following Christ, but who nevertheless are troubled by their daily faithlessness and sin? Who can hear these words without endangering his faith but he who hears their consolation as a renewed summons to follow Christ? Interpreted in this way, these words of Luther become a testimony to the costliness of grace, the only genuine kind of grace there is.

Grace interpreted as a principle, *pecca fortiter* as a principle, grace at a low cost, is in the last resort simply a new law, which brings neither help nor freedom. Grace as a living word, *pecca fortiter* as our comfort in tribulation and as a summons to discipleship, costly grace is the only pure grace, which really forgives sins and gives freedom to the sinner.

We Lutherans have gathered like eagles round the carcass of cheap grace, and there we have drunk of the poison which has killed the life of following Christ. It is true, of course, that we have paid the doctrine of pure grace divine honours unparalleled in Christendom, in fact we have exalted that doctrine to the position of God Himself. Everywhere Luther's formula has been repeated, but its truth perverted into self-deception. So long as our Church holds the correct doctrine of justification, there is no doubt whatever that she is a justified Church! So they said, thinking that we must vindicate our Lutheran heritage by making this grace available on the cheapest and easiest terms. To be "Lutheran" must mean that we leave the following of Christ to Nomians, Calvinists and Anabaptists—and all this for the sake of grace. We justified the world, and condemned as heretics those who tried to follow Christ. The result was that a nation became Christian and Lutheran, but at the cost of true discipleship. The price it was called upon to pay was all too cheap. Cheap grace had won the day.

But do we also realize that this cheap grace has turned back upon us like a boomerang? The price we are having to pay to-day in the shape of the collapse of organized religion is only the inevitable consequence of our policy of making grace available at all too low a cost. We gave away the word and sacraments wholesale, we baptized, confirmed, and absolved a whole nation without asking awkward questions, or insisting on strict conditions. Our humanitarian sentiment made us give that which was holy to the scornful and unbelieving. We poured forth unending streams of grace. But the call to follow Jesus was hardly ever heard. Where were those truths which impelled the early Church to institute the catechumenate, which enabled a strict watch to be kept over the frontier between the Church and the world, and afforded adequate protection for costly grace? What had happened to all those warnings of Luther's against preaching the gospel in such a manner as to make men rest secure in their ungodly living? Was there ever a more terrible or disastrous instance of the Christianizing of the world than this? What are those three thousand Saxons put to death by Charlemagne compared with the millions of spiritual corpses in our country to-day? With us it has been abundantly proved that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations. Cheap grace has turned out to be utterly merciless to our Evangelical Church.

This cheap grace has been no less disastrous to our own spiritual lives. Instead of opening up the way to Christ it has closed it. Instead of calling us to follow Christ, it has hardened us in our disobedience. Perhaps we had once heard the gracious call to follow Him, and had even taken the first few steps along the path of discipleship, only to find ourselves confronted by the word of cheap grace. Was that not merciless and hard? The only effect that such a word could have on us was to bar our way to progress, and seduce

us to the mediocre level of the world, quenching the joy of discipleship by telling us that we were following a way of our own choosing, that we were spending our strength and disciplining ourselves in vain—all of which was not merely useless, but extremely dangerous. After all, we were told, our salvation had already been accomplished by the grace of God. The smoking flax was mercilessly extinguished. It was unkind to speak to men like this, for such a cheap offer could only leave them bewildered and tempt them from the way to which they had been called by Christ. Having laid hold on cheap grace, they were barred for ever from the knowledge of costly grace. Deceived and weakened, men felt that they were strong now that they were in possession of this cheap grace—whereas they had in fact lost the power to live the life of discipleship and obedience. The word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works.

In our subsequent chapters we shall try to find a message for those who are troubled by this problem, and to whom the word of grace has been emptied of all its meaning. We must do this in the name of truth, and for the sake of those among us who admit that cheap grace has seduced them from the following of Christ and deprived them of the knowledge of costly grace. To put it quite simply, we must undertake this task because we are now ready to admit that we no longer stand in the path of true discipleship. We confess that, although our Church is orthodox as far as her doctrine of grace is concerned, we are no longer sure that we are members of a Church which follows its Lord. We must therefore attempt to recover a true understanding of the mutual relation between grace and discipleship. The issue can no longer be evaded. It is becoming clearer every day that the most urgent problem besetting our Church is this: How can we live the Christian life in the modern world?

Happy are they who have reached the end of the road we seek to tread, who are astonished to discover the by no means self-evident truth that grace is costly just because it is the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Happy are the simple followers of Jesus Christ who have been overcome by His grace, and are able to sing the praises of the all-sufficient grace of Christ with humbleness of heart. Happy are they who, knowing that grace, can live in the world without being of it, who, by following Jesus Christ, are so assured of their heavenly citizenship that they are truly free to live their lives in this world. Happy are they who know that discipleship simply means the life which springs from grace, and that grace simply means discipleship. Happy are they who have become Christians in this sense of the word. For them the word of grace has proved a fount of mercy.

2. The Call to Discipleship

"And as he passed by he saw Levi, the son of Alphasus, sitting at the place of toll, and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him" (Mark ii. 14).

The call goes forth, and is at once followed by the response of obedience. The response, be it noted, is an act of obedience, not a confession of faith. How could the call immediately evoke obedience? The story is a stumbling-block for the natural reason, and it is no wonder that frantic attempts have been made to separate the two events. By hook or by crook a bridge must be found between them. Something must have happened in between, some psychological or historical event. Thus we get the stupid question: Surely the publican must have known Jesus before, and that previous acquaintance explains his readiness to hear the Master's call. Unfortunately our text is ruthlessly silent on this point, and in fact it regards the immediate sequence of call and response as a matter of

crucial importance. It displays not the slightest interest in a man's religious decisions. And why? For the simple reason that the cause behind the immediate following of call by response is Jesus Christ Himself. It is Jesus who calls, and because it is Jesus, Levi follows at once. This encounter is a testimony to the absolute, direct, and unaccountable authority of Jesus. There is no need of any preliminaries, and no other consequence but obedience to the call. Because Jesus is the Christ, He has the authority to call and to demand obedience to His word. Jesus summons men to follow Him not as a teacher or a pattern of the good life, but as the Christ, the Son of God. Not a word of praise is given to the disciple for obeying the call. We are not expected to contemplate the disciple, but only Him who calls, and His absolute authority. According to our text,

there is no other road to faith or discipleship—only obedience to the call of Jesus.

And what does the text inform us about the content of discipleship? Follow me, run along behind me! That is all. To follow in His steps is something which is void of all content. It gives us no intelligible programme for a way of life, no goal or ideal to strive after. It is not a cause which human calculation might deem worthy of our devotion, even the devotion of ourselves. What happens? At the call, Levi leaves all that he has—but not because he thinks that he might be doing something worth while, but simply for the sake of the call. Otherwise he cannot follow in the steps of Jesus. This act on Levi's part has not the slightest value in itself, it is quite devoid of significance and unworthy of consideration. The disciple simply bums his boats and goes ahead. He is called out, and has to forsake his old life in order that he may "exist" in the strictest sense of the word. The old life is left behind, and completely surrendered. The disciple is dragged out of his relative security into a life of

absolute insecurity, from a life which is observable and calculable into a life where everything is unobservable and fortuitous, out of the realm of finite, and into the realm of infinite possibilities. Once again, the new life is not a law, not a set of principles, a programme, or an ideal. Discipleship means Jesus Christ, and Him alone. It cannot consist of anything more than that.

When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to His person. The grace of His call bursts all the bonds of legalism. It is a gracious call, a gracious commandment. It transcends the difference between the law and the gospel. Christ calls, the disciple follows: that is grace and commandment in one. "I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy commandments" (Ps. cxix. 45).

Discipleship means adherence to Christ, and, because Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship. An abstract Christology, a doctrinal system, a general religious knowledge on the subject of grace or on the forgiveness of sins, render discipleship superfluous, and in fact they positively exclude any idea of discipleship whatever, and are essentially inimical to the whole conception of following Christ. With an abstract idea it is possible to enter into a relation of formal knowledge, to become enthusiastic about it, and perhaps even to put it into practice; but it can never be followed in personal obedience. Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ. It remains an abstract idea, a myth which has a place for the Fatherhood of God, but omits Christ as the living Son. And a Christianity of that kind is nothing more nor less than the end of discipleship. In such a religion there is trust in God, but no following of Christ. Because the Son of God became Man, because He is the Mediator, for that reason alone the

only true relation we can have with Him is to follow Him. Discipleship is bound to Christ as the Mediator, and where it is properly understood, it necessarily implies faith in the Son of God as the Mediator. Only the Mediator, the God-Man, can call men to follow Him.

Discipleship without Jesus Christ is a way of our own choosing. It may be the ideal way, it may even lead to martyrdom, but it is devoid of all promise. Jesus will certainly reject it.

“And they went to another village. And as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of heaven have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their dead, but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God. And another said, I will follow thee, Lord; but suffer me first to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand unto the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke ix. 57-62).

The first disciple offers to follow Jesus without waiting to be called. Jesus damps his ardour by warning him that he does not know what he is doing. In fact he is quite incapable of knowing. That is the meaning of Jesus’ answer—he shows the would-be disciple what life with Him involves. We hear the words of One who is on His way to the cross, whose whole life is summed up in the Apostles’ Creed by the word “suffered.” No man can choose such a life for himself. No man can call himself to such a destiny. The gulf between a voluntary offer to follow and genuine discipleship is clear.

But where Jesus calls, He bridges the widest gulf. The second would-be disciple wants to bury his father before he starts to follow. He is held bound by the trammels of the law. He knows what he wants and what he must do. Let him first fulfil the law, and then let him follow. A definite legal ordinance acts as a barrier between Jesus and the man he has called. But the call of Jesus is stronger than the barrier. At this critical moment nothing on earth, however sacred, must be allowed to come between Jesus and the man he has called—not even the law itself. Now, if never before, the law must be broken for the sake of Jesus, it forfeits all its rights if it acts as a barrier to discipleship. Therefore Jesus emerges at this point as the opponent of the law, and commands a man to follow Him. Only the Christ can speak in this fashion. He alone has the last word. His would-be follower cannot kick against the pricks. This call, this grace, is irresistible.

The third would-be disciple, like the first, thinks that following Christ means that he must make the offer on his own initiative, as if it were a career he had mapped out for himself. There is however a difference between the first would-be disciple and the third, for the third is bold enough to stipulate his own terms. Unfortunately, however, he lands himself in a hopeless inconsistency, for although he is ready enough to throw in his lot with Jesus, he succeeds in putting up a barrier between himself and the Master. “Suffer me first.” He wants to follow, but feels obliged to insist on his own terms. Discipleship to him is a possibility which can only be realized when certain conditions have been fulfilled. This is to reduce discipleship to the level of the human understanding. First you must do this and then you must do that. There is a right time for everything. The disciple places himself at the Master’s disposal, but at the same time retains the right to dictate his own terms. But then discipleship is no longer discipleship, but a programme of our own to be arranged to suit ourselves, and to be judged in accordance

with the standards of a rational ethic. The trouble about this third would-be disciple is that at the very moment he expresses his willingness to follow, he ceases to want to follow at all. By making his offer on his own terms, he alters the whole position, for discipleship can tolerate no conditions which might come between Jesus and our obedience to Him. Hence the third disciple finds himself at loggerheads not only with Jesus, but also with himself. His desires conflict not only with what Jesus wants, but also with what he wants himself. He judges himself, and decides against himself, and all this by saying, "Suffer me first." In the graphic picture Jesus replies: "No man, having put his hand to the plough and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."

If we would follow Jesus we must take certain definite steps. The first step is to break away from our past. The call to follow at once produces a new situation. Levi must leave the receipt of custom and Peter his nets. One would have thought that nothing so drastic was necessary at such an early stage. Could not Jesus have initiated them into some new religious experience, and leave them as they were before? He could have done so, had He not been the incarnate Son of God. But since He is the Christ, He must make it clear from the start that His word is not an abstract doctrine, but the re-creation of the whole life of man. The only right and proper way is quite literally to go with Jesus. The call to follow implies that there is only one way of believing on Jesus Christ, and that is by leaving all and going with the incarnate Son of God.

The first step places the disciple in the situation where faith is possible. If he refuses to follow and stays behind, he does not learn how to believe. But this step is not the first stage of a career. Its sole justification is that it brings the disciple into fellowship with Jesus. So long as Levi sits at the receipt

of custom, and Peter at his nets, they could both pursue their trade honestly and dutifully, and they might both enjoy religious experiences, old or new. But if they want to believe in God, the only way is to follow His incarnate Son.

Until that day, everything had been different. They could remain in obscurity, pursuing their work as the quiet in the land, observing the law and waiting for the coming of the Messiah. But now He has come, and His call goes forth. Faith can no longer mean sitting still and waiting—they must rise and follow Him. The call frees them from all earthly ties, and binds them to Jesus Christ alone. They must burn their boats and plunge into absolute insecurity in order to learn the demand and the gift of Christ. Had Levi stayed at his post, Jesus might have been his present help in trouble, but not the Lord of his life. In other words Levi would never have learnt to believe. The new situation must be created, in which it is possible to believe on Jesus as God incarnate; that is the impossible situation in which everything is staked solely on the word of Jesus. Peter had to leave the ship and risk his life on the sea, in order to learn both his own weakness and the almighty power of His Lord. If Peter had not taken the risk, he would never have learnt the meaning of faith. Before he can believe, the utterly impossible and ethically irresponsible situation on the waves of the sea must be displayed. The road to faith passes through obedience to the call of Jesus. Unless a definite step is demanded, the call vanishes into thin air, and if men imagine that they can follow Jesus without taking this step, they are deluding themselves like fanatics.

It is an extremely hazardous procedure to distinguish between a situation where faith is possible and one where it is not. We must first realize that there is nothing in the situation to tell us to which category it belongs. It is only the call of Jesus which makes it a situation where faith is

possible. Secondly, a situation where faith is possible can never be demonstrated from the human side. Discipleship is not an offer man makes to Christ. It is only the call which creates the situation. Thirdly, this situation never possesses any intrinsic worth or merit of its own. It is only through the call that it receives its justification. Last, but not least the situation in which faith is possible is itself only rendered possible through faith.

This situation may be described by two propositions, both of which are equally true. Only he who believes is obedient and only he who is obedient believes.

It is quite unbiblical to hold the first proposition without the second. We think we understand when we hear that obedience is possible only where there is faith. Does not obedience follow faith as good fruit grows on a good tree? First, faith, then obedience. If by that we mean that it is faith which justifies, and not the act of obedience, all well and good, for that is the essential and unexceptionable presupposition of all that follows. If however we make a chronological distinction between faith and obedience, and make obedience subsequent to faith, we are divorcing the one from the other—and then we get the practical question, when must obedience begin? From the point of view of justification it is necessary thus to separate them, but we must never lose sight of their essential unity. For faith is only real when there is obedience, never without it, and faith only becomes faith in the act of obedience.

Since, then, we cannot adequately speak of obedience as the consequence of faith, and since we must never forget the indissoluble unity of the two, we must place the second proposition alongside of the first. Not only do those who believe obey, but only those who obey believe. In the one

case faith is the condition of obedience, and in the other obedience the condition of faith.

If we are to believe, we must obey a concrete command. Without this preliminary step of obedience, our faith will only be pious humbug, and lead us to the grace which is not costly. Everything depends on the first step. It has a unique quality of its own. The first step of obedience makes Peter leave his nets, and later get out of the ship; it calls upon the young man to leave his riches. Only this new existence, created through obedience, can make faith possible.

This first step must be regarded to start with as an external work, which effects the change from one existence to another. It is a step within everybody's capacity, for it lies within the limits of human freedom. It is an act within the sphere of the natural law (*justitia civilis*) and in that sphere man is free. Although Peter cannot achieve his own conversion, he can leave his father's nets. In the gospels the very first step a man must take is an act which radically affects his whole existence. The Roman Catholic Church demanded this step as an extraordinary possibility which only monks could achieve, while the rest of the faithful must content themselves with an unconditional submission to the Church and its ordinances. The Lutheran confessions also significantly recognize the first step. Having dealt effectively with the danger of Pelagianism, they find it both possible and necessary to leave room for the first external act which is the essential preliminary to faith. This step there takes the form of an invitation to come to the Church where the word of salvation is proclaimed. To take this step it is not necessary to surrender one's freedom. Come to Church! You can do that of your own free will. You can leave your home on a Sunday morning and come to hear the sermon. If you will not, you are of your own free will excluding yourself from the place where faith is a possibility. Thus the Lutheran

confessions show their awareness of a situation where faith is a possibility, and of a situation where it is not. Admittedly they tend to soft-pedal it as though they were almost ashamed of it. But there it is, and it shows that they are just as aware as the gospels of the importance of the first external step.

Once we are sure of this point, we must add at once that this step is, and can never be more than, a purely external act and a dead work of the law, which can never of itself bring a man to Christ. As an external act the new existence is no better than the old. Even at the highest estimate it can only achieve a new law of life, a new way of living which is poles apart from the new life with Christ. If a drunkard signs the pledge, or a rich man gives all his money away, they are both of them freeing themselves from their slavery to alcohol or riches, but not from their bondage to themselves. They are still moving in their own little orbit, perhaps even more than they were before. They are still subject to the commandment of works, still as submerged in the death of the old life as they were before. Of course, the work has to be done, but of itself it can never deliver them from death, disobedience and ungodliness. If we think our first step is the pre-condition for faith and grace, we are already judged by our work, and entirely excluded from grace. Hence the term "external work" includes everything we are accustomed to call "disposition" or "good intention," everything which the Roman Church means when it talks of *facere quod in se est*. If we take the first step with the deliberate intention of placing ourselves in the situation where faith is possible, even this possibility of faith will be nothing but a work. The new life it opens to us is still a life within the limits of our old existence, and therefore a complete misapprehension of the true nature of the new life. We are still in unbelief.

Nevertheless the external work must be done, for we still have to find our way into the situation where faith is possible. We must take a definite step. What does this mean? It means that we can only take this step aright if we fix our eyes not on the work we do, but on the word with which Jesus calls us to do it. Peter knows he dare not climb out of the ship in his own strength—his very first step would be his undoing. And so he cries, “Lord, bid me come to thee upon the waters,” and Jesus answers: “Come.” Christ must first call him, for the step can only be taken at His word. But when once Christ has called him, Peter has no alternative—he must leave the ship and come to Him. In the end, the first step of obedience proves to be an act of faith in the word of Christ. But we should completely misunderstand the nature of grace if we were to suppose that there was no need to take the first step, because faith was already there. Against that we must boldly assert that the step of obedience must be taken before faith can be possible. Unless he obeys, a man cannot believe.

Are you worried because you find it so hard to believe? No one should be surprised at the difficulty of faith, if there is some part of his life where he is consciously resisting or disobeying the commandment of Jesus. Is there some part of your life which you are refusing to surrender at His behest, some sinful passion, maybe, or some animosity, some hope, perhaps your ambition or your reason? If so, you must not be surprised that you have not received the Holy Spirit, that prayer is difficult, or that your request for faith remains unanswered. Go rather and be reconciled with your brother, renounce the sin which holds you fast—and then you will recover your faith! If you dismiss the word of God’s command, you will not receive His word of grace. How can you hope to enter into communion with Him when at some point in your life you are running away from Him? The man

who disobeys cannot believe, for only he who obeys can believe.

The gracious call of Jesus now becomes a stern command: Do this! Give up that! Leave the ship and come to me! When a man says he cannot obey the call of Jesus because he believes, or because he does not believe, Jesus says: "First obey, perform the external work, renounce your attachments, give up the obstacles which separate you from the will of God. Do not say you have not got faith. You will not have it so long as you persist in disobedience and refuse to take the first step. Neither must you say that you have faith, and therefore there is no need for you to take the first step. While you are pretending to be a humble man of faith, you are actually becoming a hardened unbeliever." It is a malicious subterfuge to argue like this, a sure sign of lack of faith, which leads in its turn to a lack of obedience. This is the disobedience of the "believers": when they are asked to 'obey, they simply confess their unbelief and leave it at that (Mark ix. 24). If you believe, take the first step, it leads to Jesus Christ. If you don't believe, take the first step all the same, for you are bidden to take it. No one wants to know about your faith or unbelief, your orders are to perform the act of obedience on the spot. Then you will find yourself in the situation where faith becomes possible and where faith exists in the true sense of the word.

This situation is therefore not the consequence of our obedience, but the gift of Him who commands obedience. Unless we are prepared to enter into that situation, our faith will be unreal, and we shall deceive ourselves. We cannot avoid that situation, for our supreme concern is with a right faith in Jesus Christ, and our objective is, and always will be faith, and faith alone ("from faith to faith," Rom. i. 17). If anyone rushes forward and challenges this point in an excess of Protestant zeal, let him ask himself whether he is

not after all allowing himself to become an advocate of cheap grace. The truth is that so long as we hold both sides of the proposition together they contain nothing inconsistent with orthodoxy, but as soon as one is divorced from the other, it is bound to prove a stumbling-block. “Only those who believe obey” is what we say to that part of a believer’s soul which obeys, and “only those who obey believe” is what we say to that part of the soul of the obedient which believes. If the first half of the proposition stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of cheap grace, which is another word for damnation. If the second half stands alone, the believer is exposed to the danger of salvation through works, which is also another word for damnation.

At this point we may conveniently throw in a few observations of a pastoral character. In dealing with souls, it is essential for the pastor to bear in mind both sides of the proposition. When people complain, for instance, that they find it hard to believe, it is a sign of deliberate or unconscious disobedience. It is all too easy to put them off by offering the remedy of cheap grace. That only leaves the disease as bad as it was before, and makes the word of grace a sort of selfadministered consolation, or a self-imparted absolution. But when this happens, the poor man can no longer find any comfort in the words of priestly absolution—he has become deaf to the word of God. And even if he absolves himself from his sins a thousand times, he has lost all capacity of faith in the true forgiveness, just because he has never really known it. Unbelief thrives on cheap grace, for it is determined to persist in disobedience. Clergy frequently come across cases like this nowadays. The outcome is usually that self-imparted absolution confirms the man in his disobedience, and makes him plead ignorance of the kindness as well as of the commandment of God. He complains that God’s commandment is uncertain,

and susceptible of different interpretations. At first he was aware enough of his disobedience, but with his increasing hardness of heart that awareness grows ever fainter, and in the end he becomes so enmeshed that he loses all capacity for hearing the word, and faith is quite impossible. One can imagine him conversing thus with his pastor: "I have lost the faith I once had." "You must listen to the word as it is spoken to you in the sermon." "I do; but I cannot get anything out of it, it just falls on deaf ears as far as I'm concerned." "The trouble is, you don't really want to listen." "On the contrary, I do." And here they generally break off, because the pastor is at a loss what to say next. He only remembers the first half of the proposition: "Only those who believe obey." But this does not help, for faith is just what this particular man finds impossible. The pastor feels himself confronted with the ultimate riddle of predestination. God grants faith to some and withholds it from others. So the pastor throws up the sponge and leaves the poor man to his fate. And yet this ought to be the turning-point of the interview. The pastor should give up arguing with him, and stop taking his difficulties seriously. That will really be in the man's own interest, for he is only trying to hide himself behind them. It is now time to take the bull by the horns, and say: "Only those who obey believe." Thus the flow of the conversation is interrupted, and the pastor can continue: "You are disobedient, you are trying to keep some part of your life under your own control. That is what is preventing you from listening to Christ and believing in His grace. You cannot hear Christ because you are wilfully disobedient. Somewhere in your heart you are refusing to listen to His call." Christ now enters the lists again and comes to grips with the devil, who until now has been hiding under the cloak of cheap grace. It is all-important that the pastor should be ready with both sides of the proposition: "Only those who obey can believe, and only those who believe can obey." In the name of Christ he must exhort the man to obedience, to action, to

take the first step. He must say: "Tear yourself away from all other attachments, and follow Him." For at this stage, the first step is what matters most. The strong point which the refractory sinner had occupied must be stormed and the truant dragged from his hiding-place. Only then can he recover the freedom to see, hear, and believe. Of course, though it is a work, the first step entails no merit in the sight of Christ—it can never be more than a dead work. Even so Peter has to get out of the ship before he can believe.

Briefly, the position is this. Our sinner has drugged himself with cheap and easy grace by accepting the proposition that only those who believe can obey. He persists in disobedience, and seeks consolation by absolving himself. This only serves to deaden his ears to the word of God. We cannot breach the fortress so long as we merely repeat the proposition which affords him his self-defence. So we must make for the turning point without further ado, and exhort him to obedience—"Only those who obey can believe."

Will that lead him astray, and encourage him to trust in his own works? Far from it. He will the more easily realize that his faith is no genuine one at all. He will be rescued from his entanglement by being compelled to come to a definite decision. In this way his ears are opened once more for the call of Jesus to faith and discipleship.

This brings us to the scory of the rich young man.

"And behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good things shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false

witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up:

What lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matt. xix. 16-22).

The young man's enquiry about eternal life is an enquiry about salvation, the only ultimate, serious question in the world. But it is not easy to formulate in the right terms. This is shown by the way the young man obviously intends to ask one question, but actually asks another. By so doing he succeeds in avoiding the real issue. For he addresses his question to the "good master." He wants to hear the opinion and receive the advice of the good master, and consult the good teacher on this specific problem. He thus succeeds in giving himself away on two points. First, he feels this is such an important question that Jesus must have something significant to say about it. Secondly, what he expects from the good master and great teacher is a weighty pronouncement, but certainly not a direction from God which would make an absolute claim on his obedience. Eternal life is for him an academic problem which is worth discussing with a "good master." But the very first word of Jesus' answer is a rude shock to him: "Why callest thou me good? One there is who is good." He now realizes he is talking not to a good master, but to God Himself, and therefore the only answer he receives from the Son of God is an unmistakable pointer to the commandment of the One God. He will not receive the answer of "good master," a personal opinion to supplement the revealed will of God. The young man is shown up as one who is trying to evade the revealed will of God, while all the time he knows that will

already. Why does he pretend that he has for long been ignorant of the answer? Why does he accuse God of leaving him so long in ignorance of this fundamental problem of life? So already the young man is caught and summoned to the judgement seat of God. He is challenged to drop the academic question, and recalled to a simple obedience to the will of God as it has been revealed.

Once more the young man tries to evade the issue by posing a second question: "Which?" The very devil lurks beneath this question. The young man knew he was caught in a trap, and this was the only way out. Of course, he knows the commandments. Once again his sole concern is with himself and his own spiritual problems. He neglects the unmistakable command of God for the very interesting, but purely human concern of his own moral difficulties. His mistake lies not so much in his awareness of those difficulties as in his attempt to play them off against the commandments of God. In fact, the very purpose for which these commandments were given was to solve these difficulties. Jesus turns the young man's attention away from himself to the God who alone is good, and in the very act He proves that He is the perfectly obedient Son of God. Moral difficulties were the first consequence of the Fall, and are themselves the outcome of "Man in Revolt" against God. The Serpent in Paradise put them into the mind of the first man by asking, "Hath God said?" Until then the divine command had been clear enough, and man was ready to observe it in childlike obedience. But that is now past, and moral doubts and difficulties have crept in. The command, suggests the Serpent, needs to be explained and interpreted. "Hath God said?" Man must decide for himself what is good by using his conscience and his knowledge of good and evil. The commandment may be variously interpreted, and it is God's will that it should be interpreted and explained: for God has given man a free will to decide what he will do.

But this means disobedience from the start. Doubt and reflection take the place of spontaneous obedience. The grown-up man with his freedom of conscience vaunts his superiority over the child of obedience. But he has acquired the freedom to enjoy moral difficulties only at the cost of renouncing obedience. In short, it is a retreat from the reality of God to the speculations of men, from faith to doubt. The young man's question shows him up in his true colours. He is—man under sin. The answer of Jesus completes his exposure. Jesus simply quotes the commandments of God as they are revealed in Scripture, and thus reaffirms them as the commandments of God. The young man is trapped once more. He had hoped to avoid committing himself to any definite moral obligations by forcing Jesus to discuss his spiritual problems. He had hoped Jesus would offer him a solution of his moral difficulties. But instead he finds Jesus attacking not his question but himself. The only answer to his difficulties is the very commandment of God, which challenges him to have done with academic discussion and to get on with the task of obedience. Only the devil has an answer for our moral difficulties, and he says: "Keep on posing problems, and you will escape the necessity of obedience." But Jesus is not interested in the young man's problems; he is interested in the young man himself. He refuses to take those difficulties as seriously as the young man does. There is one thing only which Jesus takes seriously, and that is, that it is high time the young man began to hear the commandment and obey it. All his difficulties are ungodly, frivolous, and the proof of sheer disobedience. The one thing that matters is practical obedience. That will solve his difficulties and make him (and all of us) free to become the child of God. Such is God's diagnosis of man's moral difficulties.

- [The young man has now been twice brought face to f](#)
- [8. The Brother](#)

- [17. The Disciple and Unbelievers](#)

The young man has now been twice brought face to face with the truth of the word of God, and there is no further chance of evading His commandment. It is clear there is no alternative but to obey it. But he is still not satisfied. "All these things have I observed from my youth up: what lack I yet?" Doubtless he was just as convinced of his sincerity this time as he was before. But it is just here that his defiance of Jesus reaches its climax. He knows the commandment and has kept it, but now, he thinks, that cannot be all God wants of him, there must be something more, some extraordinary and unique demand, and this is what he wants to do. The revealed commandment of God is incomplete, he says, as he makes the last attempt to preserve his independence and decide for himself what is good and evil. He affirms the commandment with one hand and subjects it to a frontal attack on the other. "All these things have I observed from my youth up." St. Mark adds at this point: "and Jesus looking upon him loved him" (x. 21). Jesus sees how hopelessly the young man has closed his mind to the living word of God, how serious he is about it, and how heartily he rages against the living commandment and the spontaneous obedience it demands. Jesus wants to help the young man because he loves him. So now comes His last word: "If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." There are three points to notice here. First it is Jesus Himself who now gives the commandment. The same Jesus who earlier had pointed the young man away from the good master to the God who alone is good, now takes up His claim to divine authority and pronounces the last word. The young man must realize that he is face to face with God Himself. As the Son of God, though the young man knew it not, Jesus had pointed him away from the Son to the Father, with whom He was in perfect union. And now once more as the Son He utters the commandment of God Himself. Jesus must make

that commandment unmistakably clear at the moment when He calls the young man to follow Him. Here is the sum of the commandments—to live in fellowship with Christ. This Christ now confronts the young man with His call. He can no longer escape into the little world of his moral difficulties. The commandment is plain and straightforward: “Follow me.” The second point to be noticed is that even this command might be misunderstood and therefore it has to be explained. For the young man might still fall back into his original mistake, and take the commandment as an opportunity for moral adventure, a thrilling way of life, but one which might easily be abandoned for another if occasion arose. It would be just as wrong if the young man were to regard discipleship as the logical conclusion of his search for truth in which he had hitherto been engaged, as an addition, a clarification or a completion of his old life. And so to avoid all misunderstandings, Jesus has to create a situation in which there can be no retreat. So He bids him embrace voluntary poverty. This is the “existential”, pastoral side of the question, and its aim is to enable the young man to reach a final understanding of the true way of obedience. It springs from Jesus’ love for the young man, and it represents the only link between the old life and the new. But it must be noted that the link is not identical with the new life itself; it is not even the first step in the right direction, though as an act of obedience it is the essential preliminary. *First* the young man must go and sell all that he has and give to the poor, and *then* come and follow. Discipleship is the end, voluntary poverty the means. The third point to be noticed is this. When the young man asks, “What lack I yet?” Jesus rejoins: “If thou wouldest be perfect. . . .” At first sight it would seem that Jesus is thinking in terms of an addition to the young man’s previous life. But it is an addition which requires the abandonment of every previous attachment. Until now perfection had always eluded his grasp. Both his understanding and his practice of

the commandment had been at fault. Only now, by following Christ, can he understand and practise it aright, and only now because it is Jesus Christ who calls him. He had asked the way to eternal life: Jesus answers: "I call thee, and that is all."

The answer to the young man's problem is—Jesus Christ. He had hoped to hear the word of a good master, but he now perceives that this word is the Man to whom he had addressed his question. He stands face to face with Jesus, the Son of God: it is the ultimate encounter. It is now a question of yes or no, of obedience or disobedience. The answer is no. He went away sadly, disappointed and deceived of his hopes, unable to wrench himself from his past. He had great possessions. The call to follow means here what it had meant before—adherence to the person of Jesus Christ and fellowship with Him. The life of discipleship is not the hero-worship we would pay to a good master, but obedience to the Son of God.

The story of the rich young man is closely paralleled by the introduction to the parable of the Good Samaritan. "And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" (Luke x. 25-9).

The lawyer's question is the same as the young man's, the only difference being that we are told explicitly that he meant to tempt Jesus. He has already made up his mind about the solution to his problem—he intends to land Jesus

in the impasse of moral doubts and difficulties. Jesus answers him in much the same terms as he answered the rich young man, for the lawyer's question likewise betrayed an anxiety to evade the obligation to obey the commandment of God. The only answer he receives is: "You already know your duty: do it and you will live."

The first round is already lost, so the lawyer must try again. Like the rich young man, he tries to escape by raising his moral difficulties. "And who is my neighbour?" How often has this question been asked since, in good faith and genuine ignorance! It is plausible enough and any earnest seeker of the truth could reasonably ask it. But this is not the way the lawyer meant it. Jesus parries the question as a temptation of the devil, and that in fact is the whole point of the parable of the Good Samaritan. It is the sort of question you can keep on asking without ever getting an answer. Its source lies in the "wrangling of men, corrupted in mind and bereft of truth"; of men "doting about questionings and disputes of words". From it "cometh envy, strife, railings, even surmisings" (1 Tim. vi. 4/.). It is the question of men who are puffed up, men who are "ever learning, and never able to come to knowledge of the truth." Of men "holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof" (2 Tim. iii. 5 ff.). They cannot believe, and they keep on asking this same question because they are "branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron" (x Tim. iv. 2), because they refuse to obey the word of God. Who is my neighbour? Does this question admit of any answer? Is it my kinsman, my compatriot, my brother Christian, or my enemy? There is an element of truth and falsehood in each of these answers. The whole question lands us into doubt and disobedience, and it is a veritable act of rebellion against the commandment of God. Of course, I say, I want to do His will, but He does not tell me how to set about it. The commandment does not give me any clear directions, and does nothing to solve my problems. The

question “What shall I do?” was the lawyer’s first attempt to throw dust in his own eyes. The answer was: “You know the commandments, do you not? Well then, put them into practice. You must not ask questions—get on with the job!” And the final question “Who is my neighbour?” is the parting shot of despair (or else of self-confidence); the lawyer is trying to justify his disobedience. The answer is: “You are the neighbour. Go along and try to be obedient by loving others.” Neighbourliness is not a quality in other people, it is simply their claim on ourselves. Every moment and every situation challenges us to action and to obedience. We have literally no time to sit down and ask ourselves whether so-and-so is our neighbour or not. We must get into action and obey—we must behave like a neighbour to him. But perhaps this shocks you. Perhaps you still think you ought to think out beforehand and know what you ought to do. To that there is only one answer. You can only know and think about it by actually doing it. You can only learn what obedience is by obeying. It is no use asking questions; for it is only through obedience that you come to learn the truth.

With our consciences distracted by sin, we are confronted by the call of Jesus to spontaneous obedience. But whereas the rich young man was called to the grace of discipleship, the lawyer, who sought to tempt Him, was only sent back to the commandment.

3. Discipleship and the Cross

"AND he began to teach them, that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders, and the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he spake the saying openly. And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him. But he turning about, and seeing his disciples, rebuked Peter and saith, Get thee

behind me, Satan: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it. For what doth it profit a man, to gain the whole world, and to forfeit his life? For what should a man give in exchange for his life? For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels" (Mark viii. 31-8).

Here the call to follow is closely connected with Jesus' prediction of His passion. Jesus Christ must suffer and be rejected. This "must" is inherent in the promise of God—the scriptures must be fulfilled. There is a distinction here between suffering and rejection. Had He only suffered, Jesus might still have been applauded as the Messiah. All the sympathy and wonder of the world might have been focussed on His passion. It could have been viewed as a tragedy with its own intrinsic value, dignity, and honour. But His rejection robs the passion of its halo of glory. It must be a passion without honour. Suffering and rejection sum up the whole cross of Jesus. To die on the cross means to die despised and rejected of men. Suffering and rejection

are laid upon Jesus as a divine necessity, and every attempt to prevent it is the work of the devil, especially when it comes from His own disciples; for it is in fact an attempt to prevent Christ from being Christ. It is Peter, the Rock of the Church, who commits that sin, immediately after he has confessed Jesus as the Messiah and has been appointed to the primacy. That shows how the very notion of a suffering Messiah was a scandal to the Church, even in its earliest

days. That is not the kind of Lord it wants, and as the Church of Christ it does not like to have the law of suffering imposed upon it by its Lord. Peter's protest displays his own unwillingness to suffer, and that means that Satan has gained entry into the Church, and is trying to tear it away from the cross of its Lord.

Jesus must therefore make it clear beyond all doubt that the "must" of suffering applies to His disciples no less than to Himself. Just as Christ is Christ only in virtue of His suffering and rejection, so the disciple is a disciple only in so far as he shares His Lord's suffering and rejection and crucifixion. Discipleship means adherence to the person of Jesus, and therefore submission to the law of Christ. In other words it means the cross.

Surprisingly enough, when Jesus begins to unfold this inescapable truth to His disciples, He leaves them free to accept it or not. *"If any man would come after me"*, He says. Nobody can be forced or expected to come, not even the disciples. On the contrary, He says: *"If any man"* is prepared to spurn all other offers which come his way in order to follow Him. Once again, everything is left for the individual to decide. When the disciples are half-way along the road of discipleship, they come to another cross-roads. Once more they are left free to choose for themselves, nothing is expected of them, nothing forced upon them. So crucial is the demand of the present hour that the disciples must be left free to make their own choice before they are told of the law of discipleship.

"If any man would come after me, let him deny himself." The disciple must say to himself the same words Peter said of

Christ when he denied Him: "I know not this man." Self-denial is never just a series of isolated acts of mortification

or asceticism. It is not suicide, for there is an element of self-will even in that. Self-denial can only mean knowing Christ and ceasing to know ourselves, seeing only Him, and not the road which is too hard for us. Once more, all that self-denial can say is: "He leads the way, keep close to Him."

. . and take up his cross." Jesus has graciously prepared the way for this word by speaking first of self-denial. Only when we have become completely oblivious of self are we ready to bear the cross for His sake. If in the end we know only Him, if we have ceased to notice the pain of our own cross, we are indeed looking only unto Him. If Jesus had not so graciously prepared us for this word, we should have found it unsupportable. But by preparing us for it He has enabled us to receive even a word as hard as this as a word of grace. It comes to us in the joy of discipleship and gives us strength to persevere.

To endure the cross is not a tragedy, it is the suffering which is the fruit of an exclusive allegiance to Jesus Christ. When it comes, it is not an accident, but a necessity. It is not the sort of suffering which is inseparable from this mortal life, but the suffering which is an essential part of the specifically Christian life. It is not suffering *per se* but suffering-and-rejection, and not rejection for any cause or conviction of our own, but rejection for the sake of Christ. If our Christianity has ceased to be serious about discipleship, if we have watered down the gospel into emotional uplift which makes no costly demands and which fails to distinguish between natural and Christian existence, then we cannot help regarding the cross as an ordinary everyday calamity, as one of the trials and tribulations of life. We have then forgotten that the cross means rejection and shame as well as suffering. The Psalmist was always complaining that he was despised and rejected of men, and that is an essential quality of the suffering of the cross. But this notion has

ceased to be intelligible to a Christianity which can no longer see any difference between a life of bourgeois respectability and the true Christian life. The cross means suffering with Christ, Christ-suffering. The only way to stand under the cross in all seriousness is to follow Christ and to cleave to Him.

... and take up his cross.” The cross is there, already awaiting the Christian before he embarks on the Christian life; there is no need for him to go out and look for a cross for himself, no need for him deliberately to run after suffering. Jesus says that every Christian has his own cross waiting for him, a cross destined and appointed by God. Each must endure his allotted share of suffering and rejection. But each has a different share: some God deems worthy of the highest form of suffering, and gives them the grace of martyrdom, while others He does not allow to be tempted above that they are able to bear. But it is the one and the same cross in every case, whether it leads to martyrdom or not.

The cross is laid on every Christian. It begins with the call to abandon the attachments of this world. It is that dying of the old man which is the result of his encounter with Christ. As we embark upon discipleship we surrender ourselves to Christ in union with His death—we give over our lives to death. Since this happens at the beginning of the Christian life, the cross can never be merely a tragic ending to an otherwise happy religious life. When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die. It may be a death like that of the first disciples who had to leave home and work to follow Him, or it may be a death like Luther’s, who had to leave the monastery and go out into the world. But it is the same death every time—death in Jesus Christ, the death of the old man at His call. That is why the rich young man was so loath to follow Jesus, for the cost of following was the death of his will. In fact every command of Jesus is a call to die, with all

our affections and lusts. But we do not want to die, and therefore Jesus Christ and His call are necessarily our death and our life. Through the call he receives at his baptism, the Christian is committed to a daily warfare against the world, the flesh and the devil. Every day he encounters new temptations, and every day he must suffer anew for Jesus Christ's sake. The wounds and scars he receives in the fray are living tokens of his participation in the cross of his Lord. But there is another kind of suffering and shame which the Christian is not spared. While it is true that only the sufferings of Christ are redemptive, yet since He has suffered for and borne the sins of the whole world and shares with His disciples the fruits of His passion, the Christian also has to undergo temptation, he too has to bear the sins of others; he too must bear their shame and be driven like a scapegoat from the gate of the city. But he would certainly break down under this burden, but for the support of Him who bore the sins of all. The passion of Christ strengthens him to overcome the sins of others by forgiving them. He becomes the bearer of other men's burdens—"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). As Christ bears our burdens, so ought we to bear the burdens of our fellow-men. The law of Christ, which it is our duty to fulfil, is the bearing of the cross. My brother's burden which I must bear is not only his outward lot, his natural characteristics and gifts, but quite literally his sin. And the only way to bear that sin is by forgiving it in the power of the cross of Christ. Thus the call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christ-like suffering which it is the Christian's duty to bear.

But how is the Christian to know what kind of cross is meant for him? He will find out as soon as he begins to follow his Lord and to share His life.

Suffering, then, is the badge of the true Christian. The disciple is not above his master. Following Christ means *passio passiva*, suffering because we have to suffer. That is why Luther reckoned suffering among the marks of the true Church, and one of the memoranda drawn up in preparation for the Augsburg Confession similarly defines the Church as the community of those “who are persecuted and martyred for the gospel’s sake.” If we refuse to take up our cross and submit to suffering and rejection at the hands of men, we forfeit our fellowship with Christ and have ceased to follow Him. But if we lose our lives in His service and carry our cross, we shall find our lives again. The opposite of discipleship is to be ashamed of Christ and His cross and all the offence which the cross brings in its train.

Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact it is a joy and a privilege, and a token of His grace. The acts of the early Christian martyrs are full of evidence which shows how Christ glorifies His own in the hour of their mortal agony by granting them the unspeakable assurance of His presence. In the hour of the cruellest torture they bear for His sake, they are made partakers in the perfect joy and bliss of fellowship with Him. To bear the cross proves to be the only way of triumphing over suffering. This is true for all who follow Christ, just as it was true for Him.

“And he went forward a little, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt . . . Again a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cannot pass away, except I drink it, thy will be done” (Matt. xxvi. 39, 42).

Jesus prays to His Father that the cup may pass over Him, and His Father hears His prayer; for the cup of suffering will indeed pass over Him—*but only by His drinking it*. That is the assurance He receives as He kneels for the third time in the garden of Gethsemane. That is the only path to victory. The cross is His triumph over suffering.

Suffering means being cut off from God. Therefore those who live in communion with Him cannot really suffer. This Old Testament doctrine was expressly re-affirmed by Jesus. That is why He takes upon Himself the suffering of the whole world, and in doing so proves victorious over it. He bears the whole burden of man's separation from God, and in the very act of drinking the cup he causes it to pass over Him. He sets out to overcome the suffering of the world, and so He must drink it to the dregs. Hence while it is still true that suffering means being cut off from God, yet by sharing the world's suffering Jesus Christ overcomes suffering by means of suffering, and makes it the way to communion with God.

Suffering has to be endured in order that it may pass away. Either the world must bear the whole burden and collapse beneath it, or it must fall on Christ to be overcome in Him. He therefore suffers vicariously for the world. His is the only suffering which has redemptive efficacy. But the Church knows that the world is still seeking for someone to bear its sufferings, and so, as it follows Christ, suffering becomes the Church's lot too. As it follows Him beneath the cross, the Church stands before God as the representative of the world.

For God is a God who *bears*. The Son of God bore our flesh, He bore the cross, He bore our sins, thus making atonement for us. In the same way His followers are also called upon to bear, and that is precisely what it means to be a Christian. Just as Christ maintained His communion with the Father by His endurance, so His followers are to maintain their

communion with Christ by their endurance. We can of course shake off the burden which is laid upon us, but only find that we have a still heavier burden to carry— a yoke of our own choosing, the yoke of our self. But Jesus invites all who travail and are heavy laden to throw off their own yoke and take His yoke upon them—and His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. The yoke and the burden of Christ are His cross.

“Discipleship is not limited to what you can comprehend —it must transcend all comprehension. Plunge into the deep waters beyond your own comprehension, and I will help you to comprehend even as I do. Bewilderment is the true comprehension. Not to know where you are going is the true knowledge. My comprehension transcends yours. Thus Abraham went forth from his father and not knowing whither he went. He trusted himself to my knowledge, and cared not for his own, and thus he took the right road and came to his journey’s end. Behold, that is the way of the cross. You cannot find it yourself, so you must let me lead you as though you were a blind man. Wherefore it is not you, no man, no living creature, but I myself, who instruct you by my word and Spirit in the way you should go. Not the way which you choose, not the suffering you devise, but the road which is clean contrary to all that you choose or contrive or desire—that is the road you must take. To that I call you and in that you must be my disciple. If you do that, there is the acceptable time and there your master is come” (Luther).

4. Discipleship and the Individual

“If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke xiv. 26).

Through the call of Jesus men become individuals. Willy-nilly, they are compelled to decide, and that decision can only be made by themselves. It is no choice of their own that makes them individuals: it is Christ who makes them individuals by calling them. Every man is called separately, and must follow alone. But men are frightened of solitude, and they try to protect themselves from it by merging themselves in the society of their fellow men and in their material environment. They become suddenly aware of their responsibilities and duties, and are loath to part with them. But all this is only a cloak to protect them from having to make a decision. They are unwilling to stand alone before Jesus and to be compelled to decide with their eyes fixed on Him alone. Yet neither father nor mother, neither wife nor child, neither nationality nor tradition, can protect a man at the moment of his call. It is Christ's will that he should be thus isolated, and that he should fix his eyes solely upon Him.

At the very moment of their call, men find that they have already broken with all the natural ties of life. This is not their own doing, but His who calls them. For Christ has delivered them from all direct contact with the world, and brought them into direct contact with Himself. We cannot follow Christ unless we are prepared to accept that breach as a *fait accompli*. It is no arbitrary choice on the disciple's part, but Christ Himself, who compels him thus to break with his past.

Why is this necessary? Why is not salvation a process of continuous growth, a gradual, wholesome progress from our life in the world of men and things to supernatural fellowship with Christ? What is this power which so scandalously comes between a man and the natural life in which it had pleased God to place him? Surely such a breach with the past is a legalistic technique like that of the Puritans with their

morbid contempt for the good gifts of God, a technique far removed from the “liberty of the Christian man”? We must face up to the truth that the call of Christ *does* set up a barrier between man and his natural life. But this barrier is no morbid contempt for life, no mere religious technique, it is the life which is life indeed, the gospel, the person of Jesus Christ. By virtue of His incarnation He has come between man and his natural life. There can be no turning back, for Christ bars the way. By calling us He has cut us off from all direct contact with the things of this world. It is His will that this should be so. Henceforth all that happens must happen through Him alone. He stands between us and God, and for that very reason He stands between us and all other men and things. *He is the Mediator*, not only between God and man, but between man and reality. Since, however, the whole world was created through Him and unto Him (John i. 3; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Heb. i. 2), He is the sole Mediator in the world. Since His coming, man enjoys no direct relation to the world. It is His will that He should be the Mediator. Of course, there are plenty of gods who offer men direct access, and the world naturally uses every means in its power to retain its direct relation with men, but that is the very reason why it is so bitterly opposed to Christ, the Mediator.

This breach with the immediacies of the world is identical with the acknowledgement of Christ as the Son of God. It is never a deliberate act whereby we renounce all contact with the world for the sake of some ideal or other, as though for instance we were exchanging a lower ideal for a higher one. That would be fanaticism and would still leave us in direct contact with the world. Only the recognition of the *fait accompli* of Christ as the Mediator can separate the disciple from the world of men and things. It is the call of Jesus, regarded not as an ideal, but as the word of a Mediator which effects in us this complete breach with the world. If it were only a question of weighing one ideal again against

another, we should naturally hanker after a compromise. In that case the Christian ideal might come out on top, but its claim could never be absolute. If we were only concerned with ideals, if we gave due regard to our natural responsibilities, we should never be justified in giving the Christian ideal a priority over the natural ordinances of life. On the contrary, a case could be made for exactly the opposite evaluation, even from the standpoint of a Christian idealism, or a Christian ethic of duty or conscience. But since we are concerned not with ideals, duties or values, but with the recognition of a *fait accompli*, there can only be a complete breach with the immediacies of life: the call of Christ brings us as individuals face to face with the Mediator.

The call of Jesus teaches us that our relation to the world has been built on an illusion. All the time we thought we had enjoyed a direct relation with men and things. This is what had hindered us from faith and obedience. Now we learn that in the most intimate relationships of life, in our kinship with father and mother, brothers and sisters, in our love for our wives, and in our duty to the community, direct relationships are impossible. Since the coming of Christ, His followers have been unable to enjoy a direct relationship with any of these, whether they belong to history, nature or experience. Between father and son, husband and wife, the individual and the community, stands Christ the Mediator. We cannot establish direct contact with our neighbour except through Him, through His word, and through our following of Him. To think otherwise is to deceive ourselves.

But since we are bound to abhor any deception which hides the truth from our sight, we must of necessity repudiate any direct relationship with the things of this world—and that for the sake of Christ. Any association which claims to offer such a direct relationship must be eschewed for His sake. For every direct relationship, whether we realize it or not, means

hatred of Christ, and this is especially true where such relationships claim the sanction of Christian principles.

It is theological error of the first magnitude to exploit the doctrine of Christ as the Mediator so as to justify the enjoyment of direct relationships with the things of this world. It is sometimes argued that if Christ is the Mediator He has borne all the sin which underlies our direct relationships with the world and that He has justified us in them. We can then, it is supposed, return to the world and enjoy our direct relation with it with a good conscience—although that world is the very world which crucified Christ! This is to equate the love of Christ with the love of the world. The breach with the things of the world is now perverted into the legalistic misinterpretation of the grace of God, the purpose of which, we fondly suppose, is to spare us the necessity of this very breach. The saying of Christ about hating our immediate relationships is thus turned into a cheerful affirmation of the “God-given realities of this world”. Once again the justification of the sinner has become the justification of sin.

For the Christian the only God-given realities are those he receives from Christ. What is not given us through the incarnate Son is not given us by God. When we offer thanks for the gifts of creation we must do it through Jesus Christ, and when we pray for the preservation of this life by the grace of God, we must make our prayer for Christ’s sake. If I cannot thank God for the sake of Christ, I may not thank Him at all; to do so would be sin. Similarly, the God-given reality of the neighbour with Whom I live is given me through Christ; if not, my relation to him is on a wholly wrong basis. All our attempts to bridge the gulf between our neighbours and ourselves by means of natural or spiritual affinities are bound to come to grief. There is an unbridgeable gulf, and “otherness” and strangeness between us. No way of his own

can lead one man to another. However loving and sympathetic we try to be, however sound our psychology, however frank and open our behaviour, we cannot penetrate the incognito of the other man, for there are no direct relationships, not even between soul and soul. Christ stands between us, and we can only get into touch with our neighbours through Him. That is why intercession is the most promising way to reach our neighbours, and corporate prayer, offered in the name of Christ, the purest form of fellowship.

We cannot rightly acknowledge the gifts of God unless we acknowledge the Mediator for whose sake alone they are given to us. There can be no genuine thanksgiving for the blessings of nation, family, history and nature without that heart-felt penitence which seeks the glory of Christ alone above all else. There can be no pure attachment to the gifts of creation, no genuine duties to the world, unless we recognize the breach which already separates us from them. There can be no pure love of the world unless we love it with the love wherewith God loved it in Jesus Christ. "Love not the world" (i John ii. 15). Yes, but we must also remember that "God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John iii. 16).

This breach with all our immediate relationships is inescapable. It may take the form of an external breach with family or nation; in that case we shall be called upon to bear visibly the reproach of Christ, the *odium generis humani*. Or it may be a hidden and a secret breach. But even then we must always be ready to come out into the open. In the last resort it makes no difference whether the breach be secret or open. Abraham is an example of both. He had to leave his friends and his father's house because Christ came between him and his own. On this occasion the breach was open.

Abraham became a stranger and a sojourner in order to gain the promised land. This was his first call. Later on he was called by God to offer his own son Isaac as a sacrifice. Christ had come between the father of faith and the child of promise. This time the direct relationship not only of flesh and blood, but also of spirit, must be broken. Abraham must learn that the promise does not depend on Isaac, but on God alone. No one else hears this call of God, not even the servants who accompanied Abraham to Mount Moriah. Once again, as when he left his father's house, Abraham becomes an individual, a lonely and solitary figure. He accepts the call as it comes; he will not shirk it or "spiritualize" it. He takes God at His word and is ready to obey. He defies all direct relationship, whether natural, ethical or religious, in order to obey the word of God. By his willingness to sacrifice Isaac, he shows that he is prepared to come out into the open with the breach which he had already made secretly, and to do so for the sake of the Mediator. And at that very moment all that he had surrendered was given back to him. God shows him a better sacrifice which will take the place of Isaac. The tables are completely turned, Abraham receives Isaac back again, but henceforth he will have his son in quite a new way —through the Mediator and for the Mediator's sake. Since he had shown himself ready to obey God literally, he is now allowed to possess Isaac as though he had him not—to possess him through Jesus Christ. No one else knows what has happened. Abraham comes down from the mountain with Isaac just as he went up, but the whole situation has changed. Abraham had left all and followed Christ, and as long as he follows him he is allowed to go back and live in the world as he had done before. Outwardly the picture is unchanged, but the old is passed away, and behold all things are new. Everything has had to pass through Christ.

This is the second way of becoming an individual—to be a follower of Christ in the midst of society, among our own kith and kin and in the enjoyment of all our worldly wealth. But note that it is *Abraham* who is called to this manner of life, Abraham who had already known what it was to make a visible breach with the past, Abraham who in the New Testament became the type of faith. How glad we would be if Abraham's experience were typical, and we could apply it directly to ourselves! If only that were the kind of life we were called to—to follow Christ, and yet retain our worldly wealth! That, we should like to think, is the way to become an individual. Yet the outward breach is most certainly easier than the hidden one. Unless we have learnt this from the Bible and from our experience, we are indeed deceiving ourselves. We shall fall back on our*direct relationships and forfeit our fellowship with Christ.

It is not for us to choose which way we shall follow. That depends on the will of Christ. But this at least is certain: in one way or the other we shall have to become individuals, whether secretly or openly.

But the same Mediator who makes us individuals is also the founder of a new fellowship. He stands in the centre between my neighbour and myself. He divides, but He also unites. Thus although the direct way to our neighbour is barred, we now find the new and only real way to him—the way which passes through the Mediator.

“Peter began to say unto him, Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee. Jesus said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or mother, or father or children, or lands, for my sake, and for the gospel's sake, but he shall receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to

come, eternal life. But many that are first shall be last, and the last first" (Mark x. 28-31).

Jesus is here speaking to men who have become individuals for His sake, who have left all at His call, and can say of themselves: "Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee." They receive the promise of a new fellowship. According to the word of Jesus, they will receive in this time a hundredfold of what they have left. Jesus is referring to His Church, which finds itself in Him. He who leaves his father for Jesus' sake does most assuredly find father, and mother, brothers and sisters again, and even lands and houses. Though we all have to enter upon discipleship alone, we do not remain alone. If we take Him at His word and dare to become individuals, our reward is the fellowship of the Church. Here is a visible brotherhood to compensate a hundredfold for all we have lost. A hundredfold? Yes, for we now have everything through the Mediator, but with this proviso— "with persecutions". A hundredfold with persecutions— such is the grace which is granted to the Church which follows its Lord beneath the cross. Such is the promise which is held out to Christ's followers—they will be members of the community of the cross, the People of the Mediator, the People under the cross.

"And they were in the way, going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus was going before them: and they were amazed; and they that followed were afraid. And he took again the twelve, and began to tell them the things that were to happen unto him" (Mark x. 32). As if to bring home to them how serious was His call, to show them how impossible it was to follow in their own strength, and to emphasize that adherence to Him means persecutions, Jesus goes on before to Jerusalem and to the cross, and they are filled with fear and amazement at the road He calls them to follow.

II THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

ST MATTHEW V

Of the “Extraordinariness” of the Christian Life

(CHAPTERS 5-12)

ST MATTHEW VI

Of the Hidden Character of the Christian Life

(CHAPTERS 13-16)

ST MATTHEW VII

The Separation of the Disciple Community

(CHAPTERS 17-19)

5. The Beatitudes

Let us picture the scene: Jesus on the mountain, the multitudes, and the disciples. The *people* see Jesus with His disciples, who have taken His side. Until quite recently these men had been completely identified with the multitude, they were just like the rest. Then came the call of Jesus, and at once they left all and followed Him. Since then they have belonged to Him, body and soul. Now they go with Him, live with Him, and follow Him wherever He leads them.

Something unique had occurred to them. That disconcerting and scandalous fact stares the people in the face. The *disciples* see the people, from whose midst they themselves have come. These people are the lost sheep of the house of Israel, the elect people of God, the “national Church”. When the call of Jesus had selected them from among the people, the disciples had done what for the lost sheep of the house

of Israel was the only natural and necessary thing to do—they had followed the voice of the Good Shepherd, because they knew His voice. Thus their very action in enlisting as disciples proves that they are members of this people; they will live among them, going into their midst, and preaching the call of Jesus and the glory of discipleship. But what will the end be? *Jesus* sees His disciples. They have publicly left the crowd to join Him. He has called them, every one, and they have renounced everything at His call. Now they are living in want and privation, the poorest of the poor, the sorest afflicted, and the hungriest of the hungry. They have only Him, and with Him they have nothing, literally nothing in the world, but everything with and through God. It is but a little flock He has found, and it is a great flock He is seeking as He looks at the people. Disciples and people, they

belong together. The disciples will be their messengers and here and there they will find men to hear and believe their message. Yet there will be enmity between them right to the bitter end. All the wrath of God's people against Him and His word will fall on His disciples; His rejection will be theirs. The cross casts its shadow before. Christ, the disciples, and the people—the stage is already set for the passion of Jesus and His Church.¹

Therefore Jesus calls His disciples blessed (cf. Luke vi. 20 *ff.*). He spoke to men who had already responded to His call, and it is that call which has made them poor, afflicted and hungry. He calls them blessed, not because of their privation, or the renunciation they have made, for there is nothing in these to entitle them to be called blessed. Only the call and the promise, for the sake of which they are ready to suffer poverty and renunciation, can justify the beatitudes. Admittedly, Jesus sometimes speaks of privation and sometimes of deliberate renunciation as if they implied

particular virtues in His disciples, but that is neither here nor there. External privation and personal renunciation both have the same ground—the call and the promise of Jesus. Neither possesses any intrinsic claim to recognition.²

Jesus calls His disciples blessed in the hearing of the crowd, and the crowd is called upon to witness the event. The

¹ The warrant for this exposition lies in the phrase *Avofytiv t6 cttoiicc*. Even in the early Church this point was emphasized. Before Jesus speaks there is a pause—all is silent for a moment or two.

² There is no justification whatever for setting Luke's version of the beatitudes over against Matthew's. Matthew is not spiritualizing the beatitudes, and Luke giving them in their original form, nor is Luke giving a political twist to an original form of the beatitude which applied only to a poverty of disposition. Privation is not the ground of the beatitude in Luke, nor renunciation in Matthew. On the contrary, both Gospels recognize that neither privation nor renunciation, spiritual or political, is justified, except by the call and promise of Jesus, who alone makes blessed those whom He calls, and who is in His person the sole ground of their beatitude. Since the days of the Clementines, Catholic exegesis has limited this beatitude to the virtue of poverty, the *paupertas voluntaria* of the monks, or any kind of poverty undertaken voluntarily for the sake of Christ. But in both cases the error lies in looking for some kind of human behaviour as the ground for the beatitude instead of the call and promise of Jesus alone.

heritage which God had promised to Israel as a whole is here attributed to the disciples whom Jesus had chosen. "Theirs is the kingdom of heaven." But disciples and people are one, for they are all members of the Church which is called of God. Hence the aim of this beatitude is to bring *all* who hear it to decision and salvation. The disciples are called blessed because they have obeyed the call of Jesus, and the people as a whole because they are heirs of the promise. But will they now claim their heritage by believing in Jesus Christ and His word? Or will they fall into apostasy by refusing to accept Him? That is the question which still remains to be answered.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Privation is the lot of the disciples in every sphere of their lives. They are the "poor" *tout court* (Luke vi. 20). They have no security, no possessions to call their own, not even a foot of earth to call their home, no earthly society to claim their absolute allegiance. Nay more, they have no spiritual power, experience or knowledge to afford them consolation or security. For His sake they have lost all. In following Him they lost even their own selves, and everything that could make them rich. Now they are poor—so inexperienced, so stupid, that they have no other hope but Him who called them. Jesus knows all about the others here, the representatives and spokesmen of the national religion, who enjoy greatness and renown, whose feet are firmly planted on the earth, who are deeply rooted in the culture and piety of the people and moulded by the spirit of the age. Yet it is not they, but the disciples who are called blessed—*theirs* is the kingdom of heaven. That kingdom dawns on *them*, the little band who for the sake of Jesus live a life of absolute renunciation and poverty. And in that very poverty they are heirs of the kingdom. They have their treasure in secret, they find it on the cross. And they have the promise that they will one day visibly enjoy the glory of

the kingdom, which in principle is already realized in the utter poverty of the cross.

This beatitude is poles removed from the caricatures of it which appear in political and social manifestos. The Antichrist also calls the poor blessed, but for quite a different reason, not for the sake of the cross, which embraces all poverty and transforms it into a source of blessing. In fact the cross is anathema to Antichrist, and to avoid it he raises a smoke screen of political and social ideology. He may call it Christian, but that only makes him a still more dangerous enemy.

“Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” With each beatitude the gulf is widened between the disciples and the people, their call to come forth from the people becomes increasingly manifest. By “mourning” Jesus, of course, means doing without what the world calls peace and prosperity: He means refusing to be in tune with the world or to accommodate oneself to its standards. Such men mourn for the world, for its guilt, its fate and its fortune. While the world keeps holiday they stand aside, and while the world sings, “Gather ye rose-buds while ye may”, they mourn. They see that for all the jollity on board, the ship is beginning to sink. The world dreams of progress, of power and of the future, but the disciples meditate on the end, the last judgement, and the coming of the kingdom. To such heights the world cannot rise. And so the disciples are strangers in the world, parasites and disturbers of the peace. No wonder the world rejects them! Why does the Christian Church refuse to participate in so many of the festivals of the land? Have Churchmen no understanding and sympathy for their fellow men? Have they become victims of misanthropy? On the contrary, the Church has a better understanding of human nature than anyone else. No-one loves his fellow men more than the followers of Jesus, and

that very love impels them to stand aside and mourn. It was a happy and suggestive thought of Luther, to translate the Greek word here by the German *Leidtragen* (sorrow-bearing). For the emphasis lies on the *bearing* of sorrow. The disciple-community does not shake off sorrow as though it were no concern of its own, but willingly bears it. And in this way they show how close are the bonds which bind them to the rest of humanity. But at the same time they do not go out of their way to look for suffering, or try to contract out of it by adopting an attitude of contempt and disdain. They simply bear the suffering which comes their way as they try to follow Jesus Christ, and bear it for *His* sake. Sorrow cannot tire them or wear them down, it cannot embitter them or cause them to break down under the strain; far from it, for they bear their sorrow in the strength of Him who bears them up, who bore the whole suffering of the world upon the cross. They stand as the bearers of sorrow in the fellowship of the Crucified: they stand as strangers in the world in the power of Him who was such a stranger to the world that it crucified Him. This is their comfort, or better still, this *Man* is their comfort (cf. Luke ii. 25). The community of strangers find their comfort in the cross, they are comforted by being thrust against the place where the Comforter of Israel awaits them. Thus do they find their true home with their crucified Lord, both here and in eternity.

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.” This community of strangers possesses no inherent right of its own to protect its members in the world, nor do they claim such rights, for they are meek, they renounce every right of their own and live for the sake of Jesus Christ. When reproached, they hold their peace; when treated with violence they endure it patiently; when men drive them from their presence, they yield their ground. They will not go to law to defend their rights, or make a scene when they suffer injustice, nor do they insist on personal privilege.

They are determined to leave their rights to God alone—*non cupidi vindictae*, as the ancient Church paraphrased it. They are quite content with the same rights as their Master—that and no more. They show by every word and gesture that they do not belong to this earth. Leave heaven to them, says the world in its pity, that is where they belong.¹ But Jesus says: “They shall inherit the earth.” To these, the powerless and the disenfranchised, the very earth belongs. Those who now possess the earth by violence and injustice shall lose it, and those who here have utterly renounced it, who were meek to the point of the cross, shall rule it. We must not interpret this as a reference to God’s exercise of juridical punishment within the world, as Calvin did: what it means is that when the kingdom of heaven descends, the face of the earth will be renewed, and it will belong to the flock of Jesus. God does not forsake the earth: He made it, He sent His Son to it, and on it He built His Church. Thus a beginning has already been made in this present age. A sign has been given. The meek have here and now received a plot of earth, for they have the Church and its fellowship, its goods, its brothers and sisters, but with persecutions even to the length of the cross. The renewal of the earth begins at Golgotha, where the meek One died, and from thence it will spread. When the kingdom finally comes, the meek shall possess the earth.

“Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.” Not only do the followers of Jesus renounce their rights, they *renounce their own righteousness* too. They get no praise for their achievements or sacrifices. They cannot have righteousness except by hungering and thirsting for it (this applies equally to their own righteousness and to the righteousness of God on earth), always they look forward to the future righteousness of God, but they cannot establish it for themselves. Those who follow Jesus grow hungry and thirsty on the way. When

all their sins have been forgiven, and they have received newness of life, they still must long for the renewal of the earth and for the perfect righteousness of God. They are still involved in the world's curse, and affected by its sin. He whom they follow must die accursed on the cross, with a desperate cry for righteousness on His lips: "My God my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But the disciple is not above his master, he follows in His steps. Happy are they who have the promise that they shall be filled, for the righteousness they receive will be no empty promise, but real satisfaction. They will eat the Bread of Life in the Messianic Feast. They are blessed because they already enjoy this bread here and now, for in their hunger they are sustained by the bread of life, the bliss of sinners.

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." These men without possessions or power, these strangers on earth, these sinners, these followers of Jesus, have in their life with Him *renounced their own dignity*, for they are merciful. As if their own needs and their own distress were not enough, they take upon themselves the distress and humiliation and sin of others. They have an irresistible love for the down-trodden, the sick, the wretched, the wronged, the outcast and all who are tortured with anxiety. They go out and seek all who are enmeshed in the toils of sin and guilt. No distress is too great, no sin too appalling for their pity. If any man falls into disgrace, the merciful will sacrifice their own honour to shield him, and take his shame upon themselves. They will be found consorting with publicans and sinners, careless of the shame they incur thereby. In order that they may be merciful they cast away the most priceless treasure of human life, their personal dignity and honour. For the only honour and dignity they know is their Lord's own mercy, to which alone they owe their very lives. He was not ashamed of His disciples, He became the brother of mankind, and bore their shame unto the death of the cross. That is how

Jesus, the crucified, was merciful. His followers owe their lives entirely to that mercy. It makes them forget their own honour and dignity, and seek the society of sinners. They are glad to incur reproach, for they know that then they will obtain mercy. One day God Himself will come down and take upon Himself their sin and shame. He will cover them with His own honour and remove their disgrace. It will be His glory to bear the shame of sinners and to clothe them with His honour. Blessed are the merciful, for they have the Merciful for their Lord.

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.” Who is pure in heart? Only those who have surrendered their hearts completely to Jesus that He may reign in them alone. Only those whose hearts are undefiled by their own vices—and by their own virtues too. The pure in heart have a child-like simplicity like Adam before the fall, innocent alike of vice and virtue: their hearts are not ruled by their conscience, but by the will of Jesus. If men renounce their own vice and virtue, if in penitence they have renounced their own hearts, if they rely solely upon Jesus, then His word purifies their hearts. Purity of heart is here contrasted with all outward purity, even the purity of an honest mind. The pure heart is pure alike of good and evil, it belongs exclusively to Christ and looks only to Him who goes on before. Only they will see God, who in this life have looked solely unto Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For then their hearts are free from all defiling phantasies and are not distracted by conflicting desires and intentions. They are wholly devoted to the contemplation of God. They shall see God, whose hearts have become a reflection of the image of Jesus Christ.

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.” The followers of Jesus have been called to peace. When He called them they found their peace, for He

is their peace. But now they are told that they must not only *have* peace but *make* it.¹ And to that end they renounce all violence and tumult. In the cause of Christ nothing is to be gained by such methods. His kingdom is one of peace, and the mutual greeting of His flock is the kiss of peace. His disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than inflict it on others. They maintain fellowship where others would break it off. They renounce all self-assertion, and preserve a dignified silence on the face of hatred and wrong. In so doing they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate. But nowhere will that peace be more manifest than where they meet the wicked in peace and are ready to suffer at their hands. The peacemakers will carry the cross

¹ There is a *double entendre* in the Greek *tiprivos-oioi*. Even Luther's *Friedfertig*, as he himself explained, is not to be taken exclusively in a passive sense. The English translation, "peacemakers," is onesided, and has encouraged a Pelagian and activist interpretation of this beatitude.

with their Lord, for it was on the cross that peace was made. Now that they are partners in Christ's work of reconciliation, they are called the sons of God as He is the Son of God.

"Blessed are they that have been persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This does not refer to the righteousness of God, but to suffering in a just cause,¹ suffering for their own just judgements and actions. For it is by these that they who renounce possessions, fortune, rights, righteousness, honour, and force for the sake of following Christ, will be distinguished from the world. The world will be offended at them, and so the disciples will be persecuted for righteousness' sake. Not recognition, but rejection, is the

reward they get from the world for their words and works. It is important that Jesus gives His blessing not merely to suffering incurred directly for the confession of His name, but to suffering in any just cause. The victims of persecution have the same promise as the poor.

Having reached the end of the beatitudes, we naturally ask if there is any place on this earth for the community which they describe. Clearly, there is one place, and only one, and that is where the Poorest, meekest, and most sorely tried of all men is to be found—on the cross at Golgotha. The community which is the subject of the beatitudes is the community of the crucified. With Him it has lost all, and with Him it has found all. It is the cross which makes the beatitudes possible. The last beatitude is addressed directly to the disciples, for only they can understand it “Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you”. “For my sake” the disciples are reproached, but because it is for His sake, the reproach falls on Him. It is He who bears the guilt. It could not be otherwise, for these meek strangers are bound to provoke the world to insult, violence and slander. Too menacing, too loud are the voices of these poor meek men, too patient and too silent their ¹

Note the absence of the definite article.

suffering. Too powerful are the testimony of their poverty and their endurance of the wrongs which the world inflicts on them. This is intolerable, and so, while Jesus calls them blessed, the world cries: “Away with them, away with them!” Yes, but whither? To the kingdom of heaven. “Rejoice and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” There shall the poor be seen in the halls of joy. With His own hand God wipes away the tears from the eyes of those who had

mourned upon earth. He feeds the hungry at His Banquet. There stand the scarred bodies of the martyrs, now glorified and clothed in the white robes of eternal righteousness instead of the rags of sin and repentance. The echoes of this joy reach the little flock below as it stands beneath the cross, and they hear Jesus saying: "Blessed are ye!"

6. The Visible Community

Matt. v. 13-16

THESE WORDS ARE ADDRESSED TO THE SAME AUDIENCE AS THE BEATITUDES—TO THOSE WHO ARE SUMMONED TO FOLLOW THE CRUCIFIED IN THE LIFE OF GRACE. UP TO NOW WE MUST HAVE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE BLESSED ONES WERE TOO GOOD FOR THIS WORLD, AND ONLY FIT TO LIVE IN HEAVEN. BUT NOW JESUS CALLS THEM THE SALT OF THE EARTH—SALT, THE MOST INDISPENSABLE NECESSITY OF LIFE. THE DISCIPLES, THAT IS TO SAY, ARE THE HIGHEST GOOD, THE SUPREME VALUE WHICH THE EARTH POSSESSES, FOR WITHOUT THEM IT CANNOT LIVE. THEY ARE THE SALT THAT UPHOLDS THE EARTH, FOR THEIR SAKE THE WORLD EXISTS, YES, FOR THE SAKE OF THESE, THE POOR, IGNOBLE AND WEAK, WHOM THE WORLD REJECTS. IN CASTING OUT THE DISCIPLES THE EARTH IS DESTROYING ITS VERY LIFE. AND YET, WONDER OF WONDERS, IT IS FOR THE SAKE OF THE OUTCASTS THAT THE EARTH IS ALLOWED TO CONTINUE. THE "DIVINE SALT", AS HOMER CALLED IT, MAINTAINS ITSELF BY FULFILLING ITS PROPER FUNCTION. IT PENETRATES THE WHOLE EARTH, AND BY IT THE EARTH SUBSISTS. THE DISCIPLES, THEN, MUST NOT ONLY THINK OF HEAVEN; THEY HAVE AN EARTHLY TASK AS WELL. NOW THAT THEY ARE BOUND EXCLUSIVELY TO JESUS THEY ARE TOLD TO LOOK AT THE EARTH WHOSE SALT THEY ARE. IT IS TO BE NOTED THAT JESUS CALLS NOT HIMSELF, BUT HIS DISCIPLES THE SALT OF THE EARTH, FOR HE ENTRUSTS HIS WORK ON EARTH TO THEM. HIS OWN WORK RESTS WITH THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, BUT THE WHOLE EARTH IS COMMITTED TO THE DISCIPLES. BUT ONLY AS LONG AS IT REMAINS SALT AND RETAINS ITS CLEANSING AND PURIFYING PROPERTIES CAN THE SALT PRESERVE THE EARTH. FOR ITS OWN SAKE, AS WELL AS FOR THE SAKE OF THE EARTH, THE SALT MUST REMAIN SALT, THE DISCIPLE COMMUNITY MUST BE FAITHFUL TO THE MISSION WHICH THE CALL OF CHRIST HAS GIVEN IT. THAT

WILL BE ITS PROPER FUNCTION ON EARTH AND WILL GIVE IT ITS PRESERVATIVE POWER. SALT IS SAID TO BE IMPERISHABLE; IT CAN NEVER LOSE ITS CLEANSING PROPERTIES. THAT IS WHY SALT WAS REQUIRED IN THE RITUAL OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES, AND WHY IN THE BAPTISMAL RITE OF THE ROMAN CHURCH SALT IS PLACED IN THE INFANT'S MOUTH (SEE EXOD. XXX. 35; EZEK. XVI. 4). _{L_n} the imperishability of salt we have a guarantee of the permanence of the divine community.

"Ye *are* the salt." Jesus does not say: "You *must* be the salt." It is not for the disciples to decide whether they will be the salt of the earth, for they are so whether they like it or not, they have been made salt by the call they have received. Again, it is: "Ye *are* the salt," not "Ye *have* the salt." By identifying the salt with the apostolic proclamation the Reformers robbed the saying of all its sting. No, the word speaks of their whole existence in so far as it is grounded anew in the call of Christ, that same existence which was the burden of the beatitudes. The call of Christ makes those who respond to it the salt of the earth.

Of course there is another possibility—the salt may lose its savour and cease to be salt at all. It just stops working. Then it is indeed good for nothing but to be thrown away. That is the peculiar quality of salt. Everything else needs to be seasoned with salt, but once the salt itself has lost its savour, it can never be salted again. Everything else can be revived by salt, however bad it has gone—only salt which loses its savour has no hope of recovery. That is the other side of the picture. That is the judgement which always hangs over the disciple community, whose mission is to save the world, but which, if it ceases to live up to that mission, is itself irretrievably lost. The call of Jesus Christ means either that we are the salt of the earth, or else we are annihilated; either we follow the call or we are crushed beneath it. There is no question of a second chance.

The call of Jesus makes the disciple community not only the salt but also the light of the world: their activity is visible, as well as imperceptible. “Ye *are* the light.” Once again it is not: “You are to be the light”, they are already the light because Christ has called them, they are a light which is seen of men, they cannot be otherwise, and if they were it would be a sign that they had not been called. How impossible, how utterly absurd it would be for the disciples— *these* disciples, such men as these!—to try and *become* the light of the world! No, they are already the light, and the call has made them so. Nor does Jesus say: “You *have* the light.” The light is not an instrument which has been put into their hands, such as their preaching. It is the disciples themselves. The same Jesus who, speaking of Himself, said, “I am the light”, says to His followers: “You are the light in your whole existence, provided you remain faithful to your calling. And since you are that light, you can no longer remain hidden, even if you want to.” It is the property of light to shine. A city set on a hill cannot be hid; it can be seen for miles away, whether it is a fortified burgh, a stronghold or a tottering ruin. This city set on the hill (the Israelite would instinctively think of “Jerusalem on high”) is the disciple community. But this is not to say that the disciples have now to make their first decision. The only necessary decision has already been taken. Now they must be what they really are—otherwise they are not followers of Jesus. And of course the following is as visible to the world as a light in the darkness or a mountain rising from a plain.

Flight into the invisible is a denial of the call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow Him. “Neither do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on the stand.” Once again we are confronted with an alternative: the light may be covered of its own choice; it may be extinguished under a bushel, and the call may be denied. The bushel may be the fear of men, or perhaps

deliberate conformity to the world for some ulterior motive, a missionary purpose for example, or a sentimental humanitarianism. But the motive may be more sinister than that; it may be “Reformation theology” which boldly claims the name of *theologia crucis*, and pretends to prefer to Pharisaic ostentation a modest invisibility, which in practice means conformity to the world. When that happens, the hallmark of the Church becomes *justitia civilis* instead of extraordinary visibility. The very failure of the light to shine becomes the touchstone of our Christianity. But Jesus says: “Let your light so shine before men.” For when all is said and done, it is the light of the call of Jesus Christ which shines here. But what manner of light is it which these followers of Jesus, these disciples of the beatitudes, are to kindle on earth? What sort of light is to shine from the place where only the disciples have a right to be? How are we to reconcile the obscurity of the cross of Christ with the light that shines? Ought not the Christian life to be as obscure as the cross itself? Is not the light exactly what they ought to avoid? It is a wicked sophistry to justify the worldliness of the Church from the cross of Jesus. Is it not plain to the simplest hearer that the cross is the very place where something extraordinary has been made visible? Or is the cross no more than an example of *justitia civilis*? Does it stand for nothing more than worldliness? Surely, in the hour of darkness there shines forth from the cross a light which terrifies those who seek it? Are the rejection and the suffering of Christ, His death before the gates of the city on the hill of shame, not visible enough? Are they what is meant by “invisibility”?

It is in *this* light that the good works of the disciples are meant to be seen. Men are not to see the disciples but their good works, says Jesus. And these works are none other than those which the Lord Jesus Himself has created in them by calling them to be the light of the world under the shadow of

His cross. The good works are poverty, estrangement, meekness, peaceableness, and finally persecution and rejection. All these good works are a bearing of the cross of Jesus Christ. The cross is the strange light which alone illuminates these good works of the disciples. Jesus does not say that men will see God: they will see the good works glorify God for them. The cross and the works of the cross, the poverty and renunciation of the blessed in the beatitudes, these are the things which will become visible. Neither the cross, nor their membership in such a community betoken any merit of their own—the praise is due to God alone. If the good works were a galaxy of human virtues, we should then have to glorify the disciples, not God. But there is nothing for us to glorify in the disciple who bears the cross, or in the community whose light so shines because it stands visibly on the hill—only the Father which is in heaven can be praised for the “good works.” It is by *seeing* the cross and the community beneath it that men come to believe in God. But that is the light of the Resurrection.

7- The Righteousness of Christ

Matt. v. 17-20

It is not at all surprising that the disciples imagined that the law had been abrogated, when Jesus made promises like this. For these promises reversed all popular notions of right and wrong, and pronounced a blessing on all that was accounted worthless. Jesus spoke to His disciples and described them as men who now possessed all things through the sovereign grace of God, as heirs-apparent of the kingdom of heaven. They enjoy perfect communion with Christ, who had made all things. They are the salt, the light, the city set on the hill. The old life is dead and done with. How tempting then to suppose that Jesus would give the old

order its *coup de grace* by repealing the law of the Old Covenant, and pronounce His followers free to enjoy the liberty of the Son of God! After all Jesus had said, the disciples might well have thought like Marcion, who accused the Jews of tampering with the text to make it read: "Think ye that I am come to fulfil the law and the prophets? I am not come to fulfil, but to destroy." Many others since Marcion have read and expounded this saying of Jesus as if that were what He said. But Jesus says: "You must not imagine that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets. . . ." And so saying He vindicates the authority of the law of the Old Covenant.

How is this to be understood? We know that Jesus is speaking to His own followers, to men who owe an exclusive allegiance to Himself. He had allowed no law to act as a barrier to His fellowship with His disciples; we saw that when we were dealing with Luke ix. 57 *ff.* Discipleship means adherence to Jesus Christ alone, and *direct* adherence at that. But now comes the surprise—the disciples are bound to the Old Testament Law. This has a double significance. First, it means that adherence to the law is something quite

different from the following of Christ, and, secondly, it means that a legalistic adherence to His person is equally removed from the following of Him. It is, however, Jesus Himself who points to the law those to whom He has granted His whole promise and His whole fellowship. Because it is their Lord who does this, they are bound to acknowledge the law. The question inevitably arises, Which is our final authority, Christ or the law? To which are we bound? Christ had said that no law was to be allowed to come between Him and His disciples. Now He tells us that to abandon the law would be to separate ourselves from Him. What exactly does He mean?

The law Jesus refers to is the law of the Old Covenant, not a new law, but the same law which He quoted to the rich young man and the lawyer when they wanted to know the revealed will of God. It becomes a new law only because it is Christ who binds His followers to it. For Christians, therefore, the law is not a “better law” than that of the Pharisees, but one and the same; every letter of it, every jot and tittle, must remain in force and be observed until the end of the world. But there is a “better righteousness” which is expected of Christians. Without it none can enter into the kingdom of heaven, for it is the indispensable condition of discipleship. None can have this better righteousness but those to whom Christ is speaking here, those whom He has called. The call of Christ, in fact Christ Himself is the *sine qua non* of this better righteousness.

Now we can see why up to now Jesus has said nothing about Himself in the Sermon on the Mount. Between the disciples and the better righteousness demanded of them stands the Person of Christ, who came to fulfil the law of the Old Covenant. This is the fundamental presupposition of the whole Sermon on the Mount. Jesus manifests His perfect union with the will of God as revealed in the Old Testament law and prophets. He has in fact nothing to add to the commandments of God, except this, that He keeps them. He fulfils the law, and He tells us so Himself, therefore it must be true. He fulfils the law down to the last iota. But that means that He must die, He alone understands the true nature of the law: the law is not itself God, nor is God the law. It was the error of Israel to put the law in God’s place, to make the law their God and their God a law. The disciples were confronted with the opposite danger of denying the law its divinity altogether and divorcing God from His law. Both errors lead to the same result. By confounding God and the law, the Jews were trying to use the law to exploit the Lawgiver: He was swallowed up in the law, and therefore no

longer its Lord. By imagining that God and the law could be divorced from one another, the disciples were trying to exploit God by their possession of salvation. In both cases, the gift was confounded with the Giver: God was denied equally, whether it was with the help of the law, or with the promise of salvation.

Confronted with these twin errors, Jesus vindicates the divine authority of the law. God is its giver and its Lord, and only in personal communion with Him is the law fulfilled. There is no fulfilment of the law apart from communion with God, and no communion with God apart from fulfilment of the law. To forget the first condition was the mistake of the Jews, and to forget the second the temptation of the disciples.

Jesus, the Son of God, who alone lives in perfect communion with Him, vindicates the law of the Old Covenant by coming to fulfil it. He was the only Man who ever fulfilled the law, and therefore He alone can teach the law and its fulfilment aright. The disciples would naturally grasp that as soon as He told them, for they knew who He was. But the Jews could not grasp it as long as they refused to believe in Him. It was thus only to be expected that they would reject His teaching on the law: to them it was blasphemy against God, because it was blasphemy against His law. Jesus, the champion of the true law, must suffer at the hands of the champions of the false law. He dies on the cross as a blasphemer, a transgressor of the law, because He has vindicated the true against the false.

The only way for Him to fulfil the law is by dying a sinner's death on the cross. There He embodies in His person the fulfilment of the law.

That is to say, Jesus Christ and He alone fulfils the law, because He alone enjoys perfect communion with God. It is Jesus Himself who comes between the disciples and the law, not the law which comes between Jesus and the disciples. They find their way to the law through the cross of Christ. Thus by pointing His disciples to the law which He alone fulfils, He forges a further bond between Himself and them. He must needs reject the notion that men can cleave to Him and be free from the law, for that spells fanaticism, and so far from leading to adherence to Jesus, means libertarianism. But this allays the disciples' anxiety that adherence to the law would sever them from Jesus. Such an anxiety could only spring from that self-same error which cut off the Jews from God. Instead, the disciples now learn that genuine adherence to Christ also means adherence to the law of God.

But if Jesus comes between the disciples and the law, He does so not to release them from the duties it imposes, but to validate His demand that they should fulfil it. Just because they are bound to Him, they must obey the law as He does. The fact that Jesus has fulfilled the law down to the very last letter does not release them from the same obedience. The law is fulfilled, that is all. But it is precisely this which makes it properly valid for the first time. That is why he who obeys and teaches the law will be great in the kingdom of heaven. "Go and teach": we are reminded that it is possible to teach the law without fulfilling it, to teach it in such a way that it cannot be fulfilled. That sort of teaching has no warrant from Jesus. The law will be obeyed as certainly as He obeyed it Himself. If men cleave to Him who fulfilled the law and follow Him, they will find they have not only to teach but to do the law. Only the doer of the law can remain in communion with Jesus.

It is not the law which distinguishes the disciples from the Jews, but the "better righteousness". The righteousness of

the disciples, we are told, exceeds that of the scribes. That is because it is something extraordinary and unusual. This is the first time we meet the word **Trepiaaeueiv**, which is so important in verse 47. We must ask, how exactly does the righteousness of the Pharisees differ from that of the disciples? Certainly the Pharisees never imagined that the law must be taught but not obeyed: they knew their Bibles better than that! No, it was rather their ambition to be doers of the law. Their idea of righteousness was a direct, literal and practical fulfilment of the commandment, their ideal was to model their behaviour exactly on the demands of the law. Of course they knew that they could never realize that ideal, there was bound to be an excess which needed forgiveness of sins to cover it. Their obedience was never more than imperfect. With the disciple also righteousness could only take the form of obedience to the law. No one who failed to do the law could be accounted righteous. But the disciple had the advantage over the Pharisee in that his doing of the law is perfect. How is such a thing possible? Because between the disciples and the law stands One who has perfectly fulfilled it, One with whom they live in communion. They are faced not with a law which has never yet been fulfilled, but with one whose demands have already been satisfied. The righteousness it demands is already there, the righteousness of Jesus which submits to the cross because that is what the law demands. This righteousness is therefore not a vague ideal, but a perfect and truly personal communion with God, and Jesus not only possesses this righteousness, but is Himself the personal embodiment of it. He *is* the righteousness of the disciples. By calling them He has admitted them to partnership with Himself, and made them partakers of His righteousness in its fulness. That is what Jesus means when He prefaces His teaching on the “better righteousness” with reference to His own fulfilment of the law. Of course the righteousness of the disciples can never be a personal achievement; it is always a gift, which

they received when they were called to follow Him. In fact their righteousness consists precisely in their following Him, and in the beatitudes the reward of the kingdom of heaven has been promised to it. It is a righteousness under the cross, it belongs only to the poor, the tempted, the hungry, the peacemakers, the persecuted—who endure their lot for the sake of Jesus; it is the visible righteousness of those who for the sake of Jesus are the light of the world and the city set on the hill. This is where the righteousness of the disciples exceeds that of the Pharisees; it is grounded solely upon the call to fellowship with Him who alone fulfils the law. Their righteousness is righteousness indeed, for from henceforth they do the will of God and fulfil the law themselves. Again, it is not enough to teach the law of Christ, it must be *done*, otherwise it is no better than the old law. In what follows the disciples are told how to practise this righteousness of Christ. In a word, it means following Him. It is the sincere and spontaneous practice of righteousness through faith in the righteousness of Christ. It is the new law, the law of Christ.

1

The Emperor Julian wrote mockingly in a letter (No. 43) that he only confiscated the property of Christians so as to make them poor enough to enter the kingdom of heaven.

8. The Brother

Matt. v. 21-6

BUT I say unto you”— Jesus sums up the whole purport of the law. All He has said so far makes it impossible to regard Him here as a revolutionary, or as a rabbi pitting one opinion against another. On the contrary, Jesus is simply picking up the argument where He left off, and affirming His agreement with the law of the Mosaic covenant. But—and this is where He is at one with the law of God—He makes it perfectly clear that He, the Son of God, is the Author and Giver of the law. Only those who apprehend the law as the law of Christ are in a position to fulfil it. The heresy of the Pharisees must be excluded at all costs. Only by knowing Christ as the Giver and Fulfiller of the law can we attain to a true knowledge of the law. Christ has laid His hand on the law, and by claiming it for His own, He brings it to fruition. But while He is in perfect agreement with the law as such, He declares war on all false interpretations of it, and by honouring it He delivers Himself from its false devotees.

The first law which Jesus commends to His disciples is the one which forbids murder and entrusts their brother's welfare to their keeping. The brother's life is a divine ordinance, and God alone has power over life and death. There is no place for the murderer among the people of God. The judgement he passes on others falls on the murderer himself. In this context “brother” means more than “fellow Christian”: for the follower of Jesus there can be no limit as to who is his neighbour, except as his Lord decides. He is forbidden to commit murder under pain of divine judgement. For him the brother's life is a boundary which he dare not pass. Even anger is enough to overstep the mark,

still more the casual angry word (Raca), and most of all the deliberate insult of our brother ("Thou fool").

Anger is always an attack on the brother's life, for it refuses to let him live and aims at his destruction. Jesus will not accept the common distinction between righteous indignation and unjustifiable anger.¹ The disciple must be entirely innocent of anger, because anger is an offence against both God and his neighbour. Every idle word we utter betrays our lack of respect for our neighbour, and shows that we place ourselves on a pinnacle above him and value our own lives higher than his. The angry word is a blow struck at our brother, a stab at his heart; it seeks to hit, to hurt and to destroy. A deliberate insult is even worse, for we are then openly disgracing our brother in the eyes of the world, and causing others to despise him. With our hearts burning with hatred, we seek to annihilate his moral and material existence. We are passing judgement on him, and that is murder. And the murderer will himself be judged.

When a man gets angry with his brother and swears at him, when he publicly insults or slanders him, he is guilty of murder and forfeits his relation to God. He erects a barrier not only between himself and his brother, but also between himself and God. He no longer has access to Him: his sacrifice, worship and prayer are not acceptable in His sight. For the Christian, worship cannot be divorced from the service of the brethren, as it was with the rabbis. If we despise our brother our worship is insincere, and it forfeits every divine promise. When we come before God with hearts full of contempt and unreconciled with our neighbours, we are, both individually and as a congregation, worshipping an idol. So long as we refuse to love and serve our brother and give him cause to nourish a grudge against us, whether we do so individually or as a congregation, our worship and sacrifice will be unacceptable to God. Such a spirit is quite

enough to erect a barrier between ourselves and God. Let us therefore as a Church examine ourselves, and see whether there is not something wrong in our relations with our fellow men. Let us see whether we are not

¹ The addition ekfj in the majority of MSS. (though not in N and B) is the first attempt to mitigate the harshness of this saying.

trying to win popularity by falling in with the world's hatred, its contempt and its contumely. For if we do that we are murderers. Let us examine ourselves and see whether we have given any token of the love of Christ to the victims of the world's contumely and contempt, any token of that love of Christ which seeks to preserve, support and protect life. Otherwise however liturgically correct our services are, and however devout our prayer, they will profit us nothing, nay rather, they must needs testify against us that we have as a Church ceased to follow our Lord. God will not forsake our brother: He wants no honour for Himself so long as our brother is dishonoured. God is the Father, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who became the brother of us all. Here is the final reason why God will not forsake our brother. His only-begotten Son bore shame and insults for His father's glory. But the Father would not forsake His Son, nor will He now turn His face from those whose likeness the Son took upon Him, and for whose sake He bore the shame. The Incarnation is the ultimate reason why the service of God cannot be divorced from the service of man. He who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar.

There is therefore only one way of following Jesus and of worshipping God, and that is to be reconciled with our brethren. If we come to hear the word of God and receive the sacrament without first being reconciled with our neighbours, we shall come to our own damnation. In the

sight of God we are murderers. Therefore “go thy way, first be reconciled with thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift”. This is a hard way, but it is the way Jesus requires if we are to follow Him. It is a way which brings much personal humiliation and insult, but it is indeed the way to Him, our crucified Brother, and therefore a way of grace abounding. In Jesus the service of God and the service of the least of the brethren were one. He went His way and became reconciled with His brother and offered Himself as the one true sacrifice to His Father.

We are still living in the age of grace, for each of us still has a brother, we are still “with him in the way”. The court of judgement lies ahead, and there is still a chance for us to be reconciled with our brother and pay our debt to him. The hour is coming when we shall meet the judge face to face, and then it will be too late. We shall then receive our sentence and be made to pay the last farthing. But do we realize that at this point our brother comes to us in the guise not of law, but of grace? It is grace that we are allowed to find favour with our brother, and pay our debt to him, it is grace that we are allowed to become reconciled with him. In our brother we find grace before the seat of judgement.

Only He can speak thus to us, who as our Brother has Himself become our grace, our atonement, our deliverance from judgement. The humanity of the Son of God empowers us to find favour with our brother. May the disciples of Jesus think upon this grace aright!

To serve our brother, to find favour with him, to allow him his due and to let him live, is the way of self-denial, the way of the cross. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. That is the life of the Crucified. Only in the cross of Christ do we find the fulfilment of the law.

9. Woman

Matt. v. 27-32

.ADHERENCE to Jesus allows no free rein to desire unless it be accompanied by love. To follow Jesus means self-renunciation and absolute adherence to Him, and therefore a will dominated by lust can never be allowed to do what it likes. Even momentary desire is a barrier to the following of Jesus, and brings the whole body into hell, making us sell our heavenly birthright for a mess of pottage, and showing that we lack faith in Him who will reward mortification with joy an hundredfold. Instead of trusting to the unseen, we prefer the tangible fruits of desire, and so we stray from the path of discipleship and lose touch with Jesus. Lust is impure because it is unbelief, and therefore it is to be shunned. No sacrifice is too great if it enables us to conquer a lust which cuts us off from Jesus. Both eye and hand are less than Christ, and when they are used as the instruments of lust and hinder the whole body from the purity of discipleship, they must be sacrificed for the sake of Him. The gains of lust are trivial compared with the loss it brings—you forfeit your body eternally for the momentary pleasure of eye or hand. When you have made your eye the instrument of impurity, you cannot see God with it. Surely, at this point we must make up our minds once and for all whether Jesus means his precepts to be taken literally or only figuratively, for here it is a matter of life or death. But the question is answered by the reaction of the disciples. Our natural inclination is to avoid a definite decision over this apparently crucial question. But the question is itself both wrong and wicked, and it does not admit of an answer. If we decided not to take it literally, we should be evading the seriousness of the commandment, and if on the other hand we decided it was to be taken literally, we should at once reveal the absurdity of the Christian position, and thereby

invalidate the commandment. Our very refusal to face the question only makes the commandment even more inescapable. We cannot evade the issue either way; we are placed in a position where there is no alternative but to obey. Jesus does not impose intolerable restrictions on His disciples. He does not forbid them to look at anything, but bids them look on Him. If they do that He knows that their gaze will always be pure, even when they look upon a woman. So far from imposing on them an intolerable yoke of legalism, He succours them with the grace of the gospel.

Jesus does not enjoin His disciples to marry, but He does sanctify marriage according to the law by affirming its indissolubility and by prohibiting the innocent party from remarrying when the guilty partner has broken the marriage by adultery. This prohibition liberates marriage from selfish, evil desire, and consecrates it to the service of love, which is possible only in a life of discipleship. Jesus does not depreciate the body and its natural instincts, but He does condemn the unbelief which is so often latent in its desires. So far then from abolishing marriage, He sets it on a firmer basis and sanctifies it through faith. The disciple's exclusive adherence to Christ therefore extends even to his married life, Christian marriage is marked by chastity and self-control. Christ is the Lord even of marriage. There is of course a difference between the Christian and the bourgeois conception of marriage, but Christianity does not depreciate marriage, it sanctifies it.

It would appear that by affirming the indissolubility of marriage, Jesus contradicts the law of the Old Testament. But there is another passage (Matt. xix. 8) which shows that in fact He is at one with the law of Moses. There He says that divorce was permitted to the Israelites "for your hardness of heart"—in other words, it was to preserve them from worse excesses. The intention of the Old Testament law is the same

as that of Jesus, to uphold the purity of marriage, and to see that it is exercised in faith in God. But purity or chastity is only possible for those who follow Jesus and share His life.

Being concerned exclusively with the purity of chastity of His disciples, Jesus naturally approves of absolute celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. But He lays down no definite programme for His disciples, whether of celibacy or of marriage, only He delivers them from the perils of - rropveicc (i.e. any sexual irregularity inside or outside of the married life). Such irregularity is a sin, not only against our own bodies, but against the Body of Christ (i Cor. vi. 13-15). Even our bodies belong to Christ and have their part in the life of discipleship, for they are members of His Body. Jesus, the Son of God, bore a human body, and since we enjoy fellowship with that Body, fornication is a sin against Christ's own Body.

The body of Jesus was crucified. St. Paul, speaking of those who belong to Christ, says that they have crucified their body with the affections and lusts (Gal. v. 24). Here we have another instance of an Old Testament law finding its fulfilment in the crucified body of Jesus Christ. As they contemplate this body which was given for them, and as they share its life, the disciples receive strength for the chastity which Jesus requires.

10. Truthfulness

Matt. v. 33-7

THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH HAS ALWAYS BEEN STRANGELY UNCERTAIN ABOUT THE INTERPRETATION OF THIS PASSAGE. SINCE PRIMITIVE TIMES, COMMENTATORS HAVE OSCILLATED BETWEEN A RIGORISM WHICH REJECTS EVERY OATH AS A SIN, AND A MORE LIBERAL POSITION WHICH REJECTS ONLY FRIVOLOUS OATHS AND DOWNRIGHT PERJURY. IN THE EARLY CHURCH THE COMMONEST INTERPRETATION

WAS THAT "PERFECT" CHRISTIANS WERE FORBIDDEN TO SWEAR AT ALL, BUT THE WEAKER BRETHREN WERE ALLOWED TO SWEAR WITHIN CERTAIN LIMITS. AUGUSTINE REPRESENTS THIS LATTER POINT OF VIEW. HE FOUND IT AGREEABLE TO THE TEACHING OF PLATO, THE PYTHAGOREANS, EPICTETUS, MARCUS AURELIUS, AND OTHER PAGAN PHILOSOPHERS, WHO MAINTAINED THAT OATHS WERE BENEATH THE DIGNITY OF GENTLEMEN. IN THE REFORMATION CONFESSIONS IT IS EXPRESSLY AFFIRMED THAT THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION OF JESUS PROHIBITING OATHS EXACTED BY THE STATE IN A COURT OF LAW. WERE NOT SUCH OATHS EXPRESSLY ENJOINED IN THE OLD TESTAMENT? JESUS HIMSELF HAD SWORN BEFORE A COURT OF LAW, AND ST. PAUL FREQUENTLY EMPLOYS EXPRESSIONS OF AN OATH-LIKE CHARACTER. NEXT TO SCRIPTURAL PROOF, THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SPIRITUAL AND WORLDLY REALMS WAS OF DECISIVE IMPORTANCE FOR THE REFORMERS.

What is an oath? It is an appeal made to God in public, calling upon Him to witness a statement made in connection with an event or fact, past, present or future. By means of the oath, men invoke the omniscient deity to avenge the truth. How can Jesus say that such an oath is "sin", "from the evil one" and "satanic"? The answer is to be sought in His concern for absolute truthfulness.

The Very existence of oaths is a proof that there are such things as lies. If lying were unknown, there would be no need for oaths. Oaths are intended as a barrier against untruthfulness. Yet by their very nature they recognize and give a

certain amount of encouragement to lying. The Old Testament had expressed its condemnation of untruthfulness by the use of the oath, Jesus condemns it by forbidding oaths altogether. Both Jesus and the Old Testament are equally concerned that lying should be banished from the life of the faithful. In the Old Testament the oath was meant to put an end to lying, but in the end it had the opposite effect of giving lying a recognized place in

life. So Jesus had to track down untruthfulness in its hiding place, i.e. in the oath. If truthfulness is to be upheld, the oath must be abolished.

There are two ways in which untruthfulness can undermine the oath: either it may actually insinuate itself into the oath (perjury), or else disguise itself in the form of an oath by invoking some secular or divine power instead of the living God. When once the lie had entrenched itself behind the oath, there was no other way of insuring absolute truthfulness but by abolishing the oath altogether.

“Let your speech be Yea, yea, and Nay, nay.” This is not to say that the disciples are no longer answerable to the omniscient God for every word they utter, it means that *every* word they utter is spoken in His presence, and not only those words which are accompanied by an oath. Hence they are forbidden to swear at all. Since they always speak the whole truth and nothing but the truth, there is no need for an oath, which would only throw doubt on the veracity of all their other statements. That is why the oath is “of the evil one”. The truth of every word they utter must be above suspicion.

It is clear that the only reason why Jesus prohibits the swearing of oaths lies in this concern for truthfulness. It also goes without saying that He admits no exceptions, however high the court of law may be. But at the same time it must be admitted that the abolition of oaths is in itself no guarantee that the truth will be told, indeed it may only lead to its concealment. No general rule can be laid down to enable us to decide where this is so, i.e. where an oath is desirable precisely in the interests of the truth; each case must be decided on its own merits. The Churches of the Reformation were convinced that every oath demanded by the state was covered by this exception. But it is

questionable whether it is possible to lay down a general rule like that.

There is, however, no question that when such a case appears to arise, an oath can only be sworn where all its implications are first made clear beyond all doubt. Secondly, a distinction must be drawn between oaths which apply to past or present facts, which are known, and oaths which pledge us with reference to the future. Since the profession of Christianity does not confer an infallible knowledge of the past, the Christian has no right to invoke the omniscient God to establish the truth of a fallible statement. Moreover, since he is never lord of his own future, he will always be extremely cautious about giving a pledge (e.g. an oath of allegiance), for he is aware how dangerous it is to do so. And if his own future is outside his own control, how much more is the future of the authority which demands the oath of allegiance! For the sake of the truth, therefore, and for the sake of his following of Christ, he cannot swear such an oath without the proviso, "God willing". For the Christian no earthly obligation is absolutely binding, and any oath which makes an unconditional demand on him is for him a lie which proceeds "from the evil one". In such a case the utmost an oath can do is to testify to the fact that the Christian is bound to the will of God alone, and that every other obligation is for the sake of Jesus conditional upon that will. If in a doubtful case this proviso is not explicitly stated or acknowledged, the oath cannot then be sworn, otherwise the Christian would be deceiving the authority. Let your speech, however, be: Yea, yea, Nay, nay.

The commandment of absolute truthfulness is really only another name for the fulness of discipleship. Only those who follow Jesus and cleave to Him are living in absolute truthfulness. Such men have nothing to hide from their Lord. He knows them and has placed them in a state where truth

prevails. They cannot hide their sinfulness from Jesus, for they have not revealed themselves to Jesus, but He has revealed Himself to them by calling them to follow Him. At the moment of their call Jesus showed up their sin and made them aware of it. Absolute truthfulness is only possible where sin has been uncovered, that is to say, where it has been forgiven by Jesus. Only those who are in a state of truthfulness through the confession of their sin to Jesus are not ashamed to tell the truth wherever it must be told. The truthfulness which Jesus demands from His followers is the self-abnegation which does not hide sin. Nothing is then hidden, everything is brought forth to the light of day.

In this question of truthfulness, what matters first and last is that a man's whole condition should be exposed, his whole evil laid bare in the sight of God. But sinful men do not like this sort of truthfulness, and they resist it with all their might. That is why they persecute it and crucify it. It is only because we follow Jesus that we can be genuinely truthful, for then He reveals to us our sin upon the cross. The cross is God's truth about us, and therefore it is the only power which can make us truthful. When we know the cross we are no longer afraid of the truth. We need no more oaths to confirm the truth of our utterances, for we live in the absolute truth of God.

But truth towards Jesus also means truth towards man. Untruthfulness destroys fellowship, but truth cuts false fellowship to pieces and establishes genuine brotherhood. We cannot follow Christ unless we live in the pure air of truth—truth before God and man.

11. Revenge

Matt. v. 38-42

JESUS classes this saying about an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth with the commandments which He has already quoted from the Old Testament, for instance, the sixth commandment against murder. He recognizes this saying, like the sixth commandment, as the veritable law of God. This law, like all the others, is not to be abrogated, but fulfilled to the last iota. Jesus will not countenance the modern practice of putting the decalogue on a higher level than the rest of the Old Testament law. For Him the law of the Old Testament is a unity, and He insists to His disciples that it must be fulfilled.

The followers of Jesus live for His sake. They renounce every personal right. He calls them blessed because they are meek. If after giving up everything else for His sake they still wanted to cling to their own rights, they would then have ceased to follow Him. This passage therefore is simply an elaboration of the beatitudes.

In the Old Testament personal rights are protected by a divinely established system of retribution. Every evil must be requited. The aim of retribution is to heal the breach of fellowship, to convict and overcome evil and eradicate it from the social life of the people of God.

Jesus takes up this declaration of the divine will and affirms the power of retribution to convict and overcome evil and to ensure the fellowship of the disciples as the true Israel. The object of the right kind of requital of evil is to abolish injustice, and to keep followers of Jesus on the true path of discipleship.

The right way to requite evil, according to Jesus, is not to resist it.

This saying of Christ removes the Church from the sphere of politics and law. The Church is not to be a national

community like the old Israel, but a community of believers without political or national ties. The old Israel had been both—the chosen people of God *and* a national community, and it was therefore His will that they should meet force with force. But with the Church it is different: it has abandoned political and national status, and therefore it must patiently endure aggression. Otherwise the remedy will be as bad as the disease. Only thus can fellowship be established and maintained.

At this point it becomes evident that when a Christian meets with injustice, he no longer clings to his rights and defends them at all costs. He is absolutely free from possessions and bound to Christ alone. Again, his witness to this exclusive adherence to Jesus creates the only workable basis for fellowship, and leaves the aggressor for Him to deal with.

The only way to overcome evil is to let it run its course, so that it does not find the resistance it is looking for. Resistance merely creates further evil and adds fuel to the flames. But when evil meets no opposition and encounters no obstacle but only patient endurance, its sting is drawn, and at last it meets an opponent which is more than its match. Of course this can only happen when the last ounce of resistance is abandoned, and the renunciation of revenge is complete. Then evil cannot find its mark, it can breed no further evil, and is left barren.

By willing endurance we cause suffering to pass over our heads. Evil becomes a spent force when we put up no resistance. By refusing to pay back the enemy in his own coin, and by preferring to suffer without resistance, the Christian exhibits the sinfulness of contumely and insult.

Violence stands condemned by its failure to evoke counter-violence. When a man unjustly demands that I should give him my coat, I offer him my cloak also, and so counter his demand; when he requires me to go the other mile, I go willingly, and show up his exploitation of my service for what it is. To leave everything behind at the call of Christ is to be content with Him alone, and to follow only Him. By his willingly renouncing self-defence, the Christian affirms his absolute adherence to Jesus, and his freedom from the tyranny of his own ego. The exclusiveness of this adherence is the only power which can overcome evil.

We are concerned not with evil on the abstract, but with the evil *person*. Jesus bluntly calls the evil person evil. If I am assailed, I am not to condone or justify aggression. Patient endurance of evil does not mean a recognition of its rights. That is sheer sentimentality, and Jesus will have nothing to do with it. The shameful assault, the deed of violence and the act of exploitation are still evil. The disciple must realize this, and bear witness to it as Jesus did, just because this is the only way evil can be met and overcome. The very fact that the evil which assaults him is unjustifiable makes it imperative that he should not resist it, but play it out and overcome it by patiently enduring the evil person. Suffering willingly endured is stronger than evil, stronger than the death of the evil person.

There is no deed on earth so outrageous as to justify a different attitude. The worse the evil, the readier must the Christian be to suffer; he must leave the evil person for Jesus to deal with, for that is no concern of his.

The Reformers offered a new interpretation of this passage, and contributed a new idea of paramount importance. They distinguished between personal sufferings and those incurred by Christians in the performance of duty as bearers

of an office ordained by God, maintaining that the precept of non-violence applies to the first but not to the second. In the second case we are not only freed from obligation to eschew violence, but if we want to act in a genuine spirit of love we must do the very opposite, and meet force with force in order to check the assault of evil. It was along these lines that the Reformers justified war and other legal sanctions against evil. But this distinction between person and office is wholly alien to the teaching of Jesus. He addresses His disciples as men who have left all to follow Him, and the precept of non-violence applies equally to private life and official duty. He is the Lord of all life, and demands undivided allegiance. Furthermore, when it comes to practice, this distinction raises insoluble difficulties. Am I ever acting only as a private person or only in an official capacity? If I am attacked am I not at once the father of my children, the pastor of my flock, and the ruler of my people? And am I not always an individual, face to face with Jesus, even in the performance of my official duties? Am I not therefore obliged to resist every attack just because of my responsibility for my office? Is it right to forget that the follower of Jesus is always utterly alone, always the individual, who in the last resort can only decide and act for himself, and that in each specific action the most serious responsibility rests upon him for those who are entrusted to his care?

How then can the precept of Jesus be justified in the light of experience? It is obvious that weakness and defencelessness only invite aggression. Is then the demand of Jesus nothing but an impracticable ideal? Does He refuse to face up to realities—or shall we say, to the sin of the world? There may of course be a legitimate place for such an ideal in the inner life of the Christian community, but in the outside world such an ideal appears to wear the blinkers of perfectionism, and to take no account of sin. Living as we do in a world of

sin and evil, we can have no truck with anything as impracticable as that.

Jesus, however, tells us that it is just *because* we live in the world, and just *because* the world is evil, that the precept of non-resistance must be put into practice. Surely we do not wish to accuse Jesus of ignoring the reality and power of evil! Why, the whole of His life was one long conflict with the devil. He calls evil evil, and that is the very reason why He speaks to His followers in this way. How is that possible?

If we took the precept of non-resistance as an ethical blueprint for general application, or as a piece of worldly wisdom, we should indeed be indulging in the dreams of fanaticism: we should be dreaming of a utopia with laws which the world would never obey. To make non-resistance a principle for secular life is to deny God, by undermining His gracious ordinance for the preservation of the world. But Jesus is no draughtsman of blue-prints, He is the One who vanquished evil through suffering. It looked as though evil had triumphed on the cross, but the real victory belonged to Jesus. And the cross is the only justification for the precept of non-violence, for it alone can kindle a faith in the victory over evil which will enable men to obey that precept. And only such obedience is blessed with the promise that we shall be partakers of Christ's victory as well as of His sufferings.

The passion of Christ is the victory of divine love over the powers of evil, and therefore it is the only supportable basis for Christian obedience. Once again, Jesus calls those who follow Him to share His passion. How can we convince the world by our preaching of the passion when we shrink from that passion in our own lives? On the cross Jesus practises what He preaches,¹ and at the same time, by enjoining this precept upon the disciples, He helps them to realize their

share in the cross. The cross is the only power in the world which proves that suffering love can avenge and vanquish evil. But it was just this participation in the cross which the disciples were granted when Jesus called them to Him. They are called blessed because of their visible participation in His cross.

¹ It is frivolous and perverse to appeal to John xviii. 23 to support the contention that Jesus did not literally fulfil His own commandments, and that He therefore dispenses His disciples from the necessity of keeping them. Jesus calls evil evil, but He meets it with passive endurance right up to His death on the cross.

12. The Enemy—the “Extraordinary”

Matt. v. 43-8

HERE, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, WE MEET THE WORD WHICH SUMS UP THE WHOLE OF ITS MESSAGE, THE WORD “LOVE”. LOVE IS DEFINED IN UNCOMPROMISING TERMS AS THE LOVE OF OUR ENEMIES. HAD JESUS ONLY TOLD US TO LOVE OUR BRETHREN, WE MIGHT HAVE MISUNDERSTOOD WHAT HE MEANT BY LOVE, BUT NOW HE LEAVES US IN NO DOUBT WHATEVER AS TO HIS MEANING.

The enemy was no mere abstraction for the disciples. They knew him only too well. They came across him every day. There were those who cursed them for undermining the faith and transgressing the law. There were those who hated them for leaving all they had for Jesus’ sake. There were those who insulted and derided them for their weakness and humility. There were those who persecuted them as dangerous revolutionaries and sought to destroy them. Some of their enemies were numbered among the champions of the popular religion, who resented the exclusive claim of Jesus.

These last enjoyed considerable power and reputation. And then there was the enemy which would immediately occur to every Jew, the political enemy in Rome. Over and above all these, the disciples also had to contend with the hostility which invariably falls to the lot of those who refuse to follow the crowd, and which brought them daily mockery, derision and threats.

It is true that the Old Testament never explicitly bids us hate our enemies. On the contrary, it tells us more than once that we must love them (Exod. xxiii. 4 /.; Prov. xxv. 21 /.; Gen. xlv. 1 ff. | 1 Sam. xxiv. 7; 2 Kings vi. 22, etc.). But Jesus is not talking of ordinary enmity, but of that which exists between the People of God and the world. The wars of

Israel were the only “holy wars” in history, for they were the wars of God against the world of idols. It is not this enmity which Jesus condemns, for then He would have condemned the whole history of God’s dealings with His people. On the contrary, He affirms the Old Covenant. He is as concerned as the Old Testament with the defeat of the enemy and the victory of the People of God. No, the real meaning of this saying is that Jesus is again releasing His disciples from the political associations of the Old Israel. From now on there can be no more wars of faith. The only way to overcome our enemy is by loving him.

To the natural man, the very notion of loving his enemies is an intolerable offence, and quite beyond his capacity: it cuts right across his ideas of good and evil. More important still, to man under the law, the idea of loving his enemies is clean contrary to the law of God, which requires men to sever all connection with their enemies and to pass judgement on them. Jesus however takes the law of God in his own hands and expounds its true meaning. The will of God, to which the

law gives expression, is that men should defeat their enemies by loving them.

In the New Testament our enemies are those who cherish hostility against us, not those against whom we cherish hostility, for Jesus refuses to reckon with such a possibility. The Christian must treat his enemy as a brother, and requite his hostility with love. His behaviour must be determined not by the way others treat him, but by the treatment he himself receives from Jesus; it has only one source, and that is the will of Jesus.

By our enemies Jesus means those who are quite intractable and utterly unresponsive to our love, who forgive us nothing when we forgive them all, who requite our love with hatred and our service with derision. "For the love that I had unto them, lo, they now take my contrary part: but I give myself unto prayer" (Ps. cix. 3). Love asks nothing in return, but seeks those who need it. And who needs our love more than those who are consumed with hatred and are utterly devoid of love? Who in other words deserves our love more than our enemy? Where is love more glorious and worthy to be praised than where she dwells in the midst of her enemies?

Christian love draws no distinction between one enemy and another. The more bitter our enemy's hatred, the greater his need of love. Be his enmity political or religious, he has nothing to expect from a follower of Jesus but unqualified love. In such love there is no inner discord between private person and official capacity. After all we are Christians both in our official and in our private capacities, or we are not Christians at all. Am I asked how this love is to behave? Jesus gives the answer: bless, do good, and pray for your enemies without reserve and without respect of persons.

“Love your enemies.” The preceding commandment had spoken only of the passive endurance of evil; here Jesus goes further and bids us not only to bear evil and the evil person patiently, not only to refrain from treating him as he treats us, but actively to engage in heart-felt love towards him. We are to serve our enemy in all things without hypocrisy and with utter sincerity. No sacrifice which a lover would make for his beloved is too great for us to make for our enemy. If out of love for our brother we are willing to sacrifice goods, honour and life, we must be prepared to do the same for our enemy. We are not to imagine that this is to condone his evil: such a love proceeds from strength rather than weakness, from truth rather than fear, and therefore it cannot be guilty of the hatred of another. And who is to be the object of such a love, if not those whose hearts are consumed with hatred?

“Bless them that persecute you.” If our enemy cannot put up with us any longer and takes to cursing us, our immediate reaction must be to lift up our hands and bless him. Our enemies are the blessed of the Lord. Their curse can do us no harm. May their poverty be enriched with all the riches of God, with the blessing of Him whom they seek to oppose in vain. We are ready to endure their curses so long as they redound to their blessing.

“Do good to them that hate you.” We must love not only in thought and word, but in deed, and there are opportunities of service in every circumstance of daily life. “If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink” (Rom. xii. 20). As brother stands by brother in distress, binding up his wounds and soothing his pain, so let us show our love towards our enemy. There is no deeper distress to be found in the world, no pain more bitter than our enemy’s. Nowhere is service more necessary or more blessed than when we

serve our enemies. "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"Pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you." This is the supreme demand. Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God. Jesus does not promise that when we bless our enemies and do good to them they will not despitefully use and persecute us. They certainly will. But not even that can hurt or overcome us, so long as we pray for them. For if we pray for them, we are taking their distress and poverty, their guilt and perdition upon ourselves, and pleading to God for them. We are doing vicariously for them what they cannot do for themselves. Every insult they utter only serves to bind us more closely with God and with them. Their persecution of us only serves to bring them nearer to reconciliation with God and to further the triumphs of love.

How then does love conquer? By asking not how the enemy treats her but only how Jesus treated her. The love of our enemies takes us along the way of the cross and into fellowship with the Crucified. The more we are driven along this road, the more certain is the victory of love over the enemy's hatred. For then it is not the disciple's own love, but the love of Jesus Christ alone, who for the sake of His enemies went to the cross and prayed for them as He hung there. Before Jesus set out along that path the disciples confessed that they too were His enemies, and that He had overcome them by His love. It is this that opens the disciple's eyes, and enables him to see his enemy as a brother. He knows that he owes his very life to One who, though he was His enemy, treated him as a brother and accepted him, who made him His neighbour, and drew him into fellowship with Himself.

The disciple can now perceive that even his enemy is the object of God's love, and that he stands like himself beneath the cross of Christ. God asked us nothing about our virtues or our vices, for in His sight even our virtue was ungodliness. God's love sought out His enemies who needed it, and whom He deemed worthy of it. God loves His enemies—that is the glory of His love, as every follower of Jesus knows; through Jesus he has become a partaker in this love. For God allows His sun to shine upon the just and the unjust. But not only the earthly sun and the earthly rain: the “Sun of righteousness ” and the rain of God's word also shine on the sinner, and reveal the grace of the Heavenly Father. Perfect, all-inclusive love is the act of the Father, and of His only-begotten Son.

“This commandment, that we should love our enemies and forgo revenge will grow more urgent as the years roll on, as we fight in the holy war where love and hate engage in mortal combat. It is the bounden duty of every Christian soul to enter into the thick of the fray with might and main. The time is coming when the confession of the living God will incur not only the hatred and the fury of the world, for on the whole that is true already, but complete ostracism from ‘human society’, as they call it. The Christians will be hounded from place to place, subjected to physical assault, maltreatment and death of every kind. We are approaching an age of widespread persecution. Therein lies the true significance of all the movements and conflicts of our age. Our adversaries seek to root out the Christian Church and the Christian faith because they cannot live side by side with us, because they see in every word we utter and every deed we do, even when they are not specifically directed against them, a condemnation of their own words and deeds. They are not far wrong. They suspect too that we are indifferent to their condemnation. Indeed they must admit that it is utterly futile to condemn us. We do not reciprocate

their hatred and contention, although they would like it better if we did, and so sink to their own level. And how is the battle to be fought? In the coming age we shall pray, not as isolated individuals, but as a corporate body, a congregation, a

Church: we shall pray in multitudes (albeit in relatively small multitudes) and among the thousands and thousands of apostates we shall loudly praise and confess the Lord who was crucified and is risen and shall come again. And what prayer, what confession, what hymn of praise will it be? It will be the prayer of earnest love for these very sons of perdition who stand around and gaze at us with eyes aflame with hatred, and who have perhaps already raised their hands to kill us. It will be a prayer for the peace of these erring and bewildered souls, who have drifted into disquiet and desolation, a prayer for the same love and peace which we ourselves enjoy, a prayer which will penetrate to the depths of their souls and rend their hearts more grievously than anything they can do to us. Yes, the Church which is really waiting for its Lord, and which discerns the signs of the times, must fling itself with its utmost power and with the panoply of its holy life into this prayer of love" (A. F. C. Vilmar, 1880).

What is undivided love? Love which shows no favouritism to those who love us in return. When we love those who love us, our brethren, our nation, our friends, yes, and even our own congregation, we are no better than the heathen and the publicans. Such love is ordinary and natural, and not distinctively Christian. We can love our kith and kin, our fellow countrymen and our friends, whether we are Christians or not, and there is no need for Jesus to teach us that. But He takes that kind of love for granted, and in contrast asserts that we must love our enemies. Thus He

shows us what *He* means by love, and the attitude we must display towards it.

How then do the disciples differ from the heathen? What does it really mean to be a Christian? Here we meet the word which controls the whole chapter, and sums up all we have heard so far. What makes the Christian different from other men is the "*peculiar*", the *uepicraov*, the "extraordinary", the "unusual", that which is not "a matter-of-course". This is the quality whereby the better righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. It is "the more", the "beyond-all-that". The natural is *t6 ouccuto* (one and the same) for heathen and Christian, the distinctive quality of the Christian life begins with the *mpiaaov*. It is this quality which first enables us to see the natural in its true light. Where it is lacking, the peculiar graces of Christianity are absent. It cannot occur within the sphere of natural possibilities, but only when they are transcended. The *mpiCTCTov* never merges into the *to auauxo*. That was the fatal mistake of the false Protestant ethic which diluted Christian love into patriotism, friendliness, and industriousness, which in short, perverted the better righteousness into *justitia civilis*. Not in such terms as these does Jesus speak. For Him the hall-mark of the Christian is the "extraordinary". The Christian cannot sink to the world's level, because he must always remember the *Trspicraov*.

What is the precise nature of the *TrepicrcTov*? It is the life described in the beatitudes, the life of the followers of Jesus, the light which illuminates, the city set on the hill, the way of self-renunciation, of absolute purity, truthfulness and meekness. It is unreserved love for our enemies, for the unloving and the unloved, love for our religious, political and personal adversaries. In every case it is the love which was fulfilled in the cross of Christ. What is the *Trepicrcrov*? It is the love of Jesus Christ Himself, who went patiently and

obediently to the cross—it is in fact the cross itself. The cross is the differential of the Christian religion, the power which enables the Christian to transcend the world and to win the victory. The *passio* in the love of the Crucified is the supreme expression of the “extraordinary” quality of the Christian life.

The “extraordinary” quality is undoubtedly identical with the light which shines before men and for which they glorify the Father which is in heaven. It cannot be hidden under a bushel, it must be seen of men. The community of the followers of Jesus, the community of the better righteousness, is the visible community: it has left the world and society, and counted everything but loss for the cross of Christ.

And how does this quality work out in practice? The “extraordinary”—and this is the supreme scandal—is something which the followers of Jesus *do*. It must be *done* like the better righteousness, and done so that all men can see it. It is not strict Puritanism, not some eccentric pattern of Christian living, but simple, unreflecting obedience to the will of Christ. If we make the “extraordinary” our standard, we shall be led into the *passio* of Christ, and in that its peculiar quality will be displayed. This activity itself is ceaseless suffering. In it the disciple endures the suffering of Christ. If this is not so, then *this* is not the activity of which Jesus speaks.

Hence the Ttspicrcrov is the fulfilment of the law, the keeping of the commandments. In Christ crucified and in His people the “extraordinary” occurs.

These men are the perfect, the men in whom the undivided love of the Heavenly Father is perfected. It was that love which gave the Son to die for us upon the cross, and it is by

suffering in the fellowship of this cross that the followers of Jesus are perfected. The perfect are none other than the blessed of the beatitudes.

13. The Hidden Righteousness

Matt. vi. 1-4

In chapter v we were told how the disciple community is essentially visible in character, and how its visibility culminates in the Τρεπικρα'ov. We saw that the hall-mark of Christianity is our separation from the world, our transcendence of its standards, and our performance of something out of the ordinary. The next chapter takes up the theme of the Τρσπιααov, and lays bare its ambiguity. How easy it would be for the disciples to misinterpret it! We can well imagine them saying: "Now we must set to work and build the Kingdom of Heaven on earth"—and in so doing they would ignore and perhaps even overthrow the established order of things. They might adopt an attitude of indifference to this present age, like the fanatics, and try to realize the extraordinary quality of the age to come in a visible institution. Their ideal would then be to withdraw radically and uncompromisingly from the world and by means of force to set up a Christian order more compatible with their following of Christ and more in accordance with His extraordinary demand. Here, they would argue, is just another pattern for a devout and holy life, though this time it is a novel one with the power to liberate and inspire. How eagerly would the religious embrace a life of poverty, truthfulness and suffering, if only they might thereby satisfy their yearning not only to believe, but to see with their own eyes! After all, they could argue, they were doing it all for the supreme cause, the realization of the "extraordinary".

Others on the other hand would be waiting to hear what Jesus had to say about the “extraordinary” only to pounce upon it with all their fury. Here at last, they would say, the fanatic has come out in His true colours. Now we know what

He is, a revolutionary who wants to turn the whole world upside down and build a new one. Is *this* obedience to the word of the Old Testament? Is it not rather the most glaring example of self-righteousness? Does not Jesus know that all He demands is bound to come to grief because of the world’s sin? Does it not prove Him a victim of spiritual pride, always the first sign of fanaticism? No, they would say, genuine obedience and humility are only to be found in the ordinary, the commonplace, and the hidden. Had Jesus urged His disciples to return to their own kith and kin, back to duty and calling, back to the obedience of the law as the scribes expounded it, they would then have known that He was devout, humble and obedient. He would then have given His disciples an inspiring incentive to deeper devotion and stricter obedience. He would have taught what the scribes knew already, what they would gladly have heard Him emphasize in His preaching, namely that true devotion and righteousness consist not merely in outward behaviour, but in the disposition of the heart, and conversely not only in the disposition of the heart, but also in concrete action. That would have been just the kind of “better righteousness” the people needed, and one which was too good to refuse. But now Jesus had lost His chance. He had stepped forth not as a humble teacher, but as an arrogant fanatic. Fanatics of course have always known the secret of kindling the enthusiasm of men, especially the noblest and best of them. Did not the doctors of the law know that for all its nobility the heart of man still spoke with the voice of the flesh? Jesus was sacrificing the best sons of the nation, the most upright and devout, for nothing more than a dream. The “extraordinary” was simply the spontaneous work of

devotion and piety. It was the trumping up of human freedom against unreflecting obedience to the command of God, the illegitimate self-justification of man, which refuses to let the law have its way; the lawless self-sanctification which the law was bound to condemn; free work as opposed to bounden duty, the destruction of the Church of God, the denial of faith, blasphemy against the law and against God Himself. ... If the law had its way Jesus would be put to death for teaching the “extraordinary”.

And how does Jesus answer these objections? He says: “Take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men, to be seen of them.” The call to the “extraordinary” is the risk men must take when they follow Christ. And therefore Jesus warns us to take heed. He calls a halt to the innocent spontaneous joy we get from making our Christianity visible. He calls us to reflect on what we are doing.

The disciples are told that they can possess the “extraordinary” only so long as they are reflective: they must beware how they use it, and never fulfil it simply for its own sake, or for the sake of ostentation. The better righteousness of the disciples must have a motive which lies beyond itself. Of course it has to be visible, but they must take care that it does not become visible simply for the sake of becoming visible. There are of course proper grounds for insisting on the visible nature of Christian discipleship, but the visibility is never an end in itself; and if it becomes so we have lost sight of our primary aim, which is to follow Jesus. And, having once done that, we should never be able to carry on again where we had left off; we should have to begin all over again at the beginning. And that would bring it home to us that we were no true disciples. We are therefore confronted with a paradox. Our activity must be visible, but never be done for the sake of making it visible. “Let your light so shine before men” (v 16) and yet: Take

care that you hide it! There is a pointed contrast between chapters v and vi. That which is visible must also be hidden. The reflection on which Jesus insists is intended to prevent us from reflecting on our extraordinary position. We have to take heed that we do not take heed of our own righteousness. Otherwise the “extraordinary” which we achieve will not be that which comes from following Christ, but that which springs from our own will and desire.

How is this paradox to be resolved? The first question to ask is: From whom are we to hide the visibility of our discipleship? Certainly not from other men, for we are told to let them see our light. No. We are to hide it from *ourselves*. Our task is simply to keep on following, looking only to our Leader who goes on before, taking no notice of ourselves or of what we are doing. We must be unaware of our own righteousness, and see it only in so far as we look unto Jesus; then it will seem not extraordinary, but quite ordinary and natural. Thus we hide the visible from ourselves in obedience to the word of Jesus. If the “extraordinary” were important for its own sake, we should, like fanatics, be relying on our own fleshly strength and power, whereas the disciple of Jesus acts simply in obedience to his Lord. That is, he regards the “extraordinary” as the natural fruit of obedience. According to the word of Jesus it cannot be otherwise: the Christian is a light unto the world, not because of any quality of his own, but only because he follows Christ and looks solely to Him. But precisely because the Christian life is of its very nature extraordinary, it is at the same time ordinary, natural, and *hidden*. If not, it is not the Christian life at all, it is not obedience to the will of Jesus Christ.

Secondly, we have to ask how the visible and the invisible aspects of discipleship can be combined, and how the same life can be both visible and hidden. To answer this question,

all we need to do is to go back to chapter v, where the extraordinary and the visible are defined as the cross of Christ beneath which the disciples stand. The cross is at once the necessary, the hidden and the visible—it is the “extraordinary”.

Thirdly, we have to ask how the contradiction between the fifth and the sixth chapters is to be resolved. The answer lies in the meaning of discipleship. It means an exclusive adherence to Him, and that implies first, that the disciple looks only to His Lord and follows Him. If he looked only at the extraordinary quality of the Christian life, he would no longer be following Christ. For the disciple this extraordinary quality consists solely in the will of the Lord, and when he seeks to do that will he knows that there is no other alternative, and that what he does is the only natural thing to do.

All that the follower of Jesus has to do is to make sure that his obedience, following and love are entirely spontaneous and unpremeditated. If you do good, you must not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, you must be quite unconscious of it. Otherwise you are simply displaying your own virtue, and not that which has its source in Jesus Christ. Christ's virtue, the virtue of discipleship, can only be accomplished so long as you are entirely unconscious of what you are doing. The genuine work of love is always a hidden work. Take heed therefore that you know it not, for only so is it the goodness of God. If we want to know our own goodness or love, it has already ceased to be love. We must be unaware even of our love for our enemies. After all, when we love them they are no longer our enemies. This blind spot in the Christian (which is really sight illuminated by Christ) is his certainty, and the fact that his life is hidden from his sight is the ground of his assurance.

Thus hiddenness has its counterpart in manifestation. For there is nothing hidden that shall not be revealed. For our God is a God unto whom all hearts are open, and from whom no secrets are hid. God will show us the hidden and make it visible. Manifestation is the appointed reward for hiddenness, and the only question is where we shall receive it and who will give it us. If we want publicity in the eyes of men we have our reward. In other words, it is immaterial whether the publicity we want is the grosser kind, which all can see, or the more subtle variety which we can only see ourselves. If the left hand knows what the right hand is doing, if we become conscious of our hidden virtue, we are forging our own reward, instead of that which God had intended to give us in His own good time. But if we are content to carry on with our life hidden from our eyes, we shall receive our reward openly from God. But who can live a life like this? The answer is obvious. Because love is hidden it cannot be a visible virtue or a habit which can be acquired. Take heed, it says, that you do not exchange true love for an amiable virtuousness, a human "quality". Genuine love is always self-forgetful in the true sense of the word. But if we are to have it, our old man must die with all his virtues and qualities, and this can only be done where the disciple forgets self and clings solely to Christ. When Jesus said: "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth," He was sounding the death-bell of the old man. Once again, who can live a life which combines chapters v and vi? Only those who have died after the old man through Christ, and are given a new life by following Him and having fellowship with Him. Love, in the sense of spontaneous, unreflective action, spells the death of the old man. For man recovers his true nature in the righteousness of Christ and in his fellow man. The love of Christ crucified, who delivers our old man to death, is the love which lives in those who follow Him. Henceforth the Christian finds himself only in Christ and in his brethren.

14. The Hiddenness of Prayer

Matt. vi. 5-8

JESUS TEACHES HIS DISCIPLES TO PRAY. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? IT MEANS THAT PRAYER IS BY NO MEANS AN OBVIOUS OR NATURAL ACTIVITY. IT IS THE EXPRESSION OF A UNIVERSAL HUMAN INSTINCT, BUT THAT DOES NOT JUSTIFY IT IN THE SIGHT OF GOD. EVEN WHERE PRAYER IS CULTIVATED WITH DISCIPLINE AND PERSEVERANCE IT CAN STILL BE PROFITLESS AND VOID OF GOD'S BLESSING. THE DISCIPLES ARE PERMITTED TO PRAY BECAUSE JESUS TELLS THEM THEY MAY —AND HE KNOWS THE FATHER. HE PROMISES THAT GOD WILL HEAR THEM. THAT IS TO SAY, THE DISCIPLES PRAY ONLY BECAUSE THEY ARE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST AND HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM. ONLY THOSE WHO, LIKE THEM, ADHERE TO JESUS HAVE ACCESS TO THE FATHER THROUGH HIM. ALL CHRISTIAN PRAYER IS DIRECTED TO GOD THROUGH A MEDIATOR, AND NOT EVEN PRAYER AFFORDS DIRECT ACCESS TO THE FATHER. ONLY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST CAN WE FIND THE FATHER IN PRAYER. CHRISTIAN PRAYER PRESUPPOSES FAITH, THAT IS, ADHERENCE TO CHRIST. HE IS THE ONE AND ONLY MEDIATOR OF OUR PRAYERS. WHEN WE PRAY WE RELY ON HIS WORD, AND TO THAT WORD CHRISTIAN PRAYER IS ALWAYS BOUND.

We pray to God because we believe in Him through Jesus Christ; that is to say, our prayer can never be an entreaty to God, for we have no need to come before Him in that way. We are privileged to know that He knows our needs before we ask Him. This is what gives Christian prayer its boundless confidence and its joyous certainty. It matters little what form of prayer we adopt or how many words we use, what matters is the faith which lays hold on God and touches the heart of the Father who knew us long before we came to Him.

Genuine prayer is never a cult, or even an act of devotion: it is always the prayer of a child to a Father. Hence it is never given to self-display, whether before God, ourselves, or other people. If God were ignorant of our needs, we should have to

think out beforehand *how* we should tell Him about them, *what* we should tell Him, and whether we should tell Him or not. Thus faith, which is the mainspring of Christian prayer, excludes all reflection and premeditation.

Prayer is the supreme instance of the hidden character of the Christian life. It is the antithesis of self-display. When men pray, they have ceased to know themselves, and know only the God whom they address. Prayer does not aim at any direct effect on the world; it is addressed to God alone, and is therefore the perfect example of self-effacement.

Of course there is a danger even here. Prayer of this kind can seek self-display, it can seek to bring to light that which is hidden. This may happen in public prayer, which sometimes (though not often nowadays) degenerates into a continuous babble. It is far more likely to happen with private prayer; for it is very tempting to get outside of ourselves and contemplate our prayers as detached observers. We are then praying to ourselves, no matter whether such contemplation gives us enjoyment and self-satisfaction or fills us with loathing and shame. After all, showing off in the street is only a naive form of the self-display we contrive in our innermost chambers—to such lengths can we distort the words of Jesus. We want to say our prayers and hear them as well, not being content to wait for God to hear us and to show us in His own good time that He has heard us. We pin our faith on the devout feelings we enjoy, and thereby rest assured that our prayers have been heard. They have, and we have our reward. Since we have heard ourselves, God will not hear us. Having contrived our own reward of publicity, we cannot expect God to reward us any further.

What does Jesus mean when He speaks of the chamber?
How are we to shut the door to prevent others from

overhearing us, and so depriving us of our reward? How are we to be protected from ourselves, and our own premeditation? How are we to drive out reflection by reflecting? The only way is by mortifying our own wills which are always obtruding themselves. And the only way to do this is by letting Christ alone reign in our hearts, by surrendering our wills completely to Him, by living in fellowship with Jesus and by following Him. Then we can pray that His will may be done, the will of Him who knows our needs before we ask. Only then is our prayer certain, strong and pure. And then prayer is really and truly *petition*. The child asks of the Father whom he knows. Thus the essence of Christian prayer is not the vague adoration of mysticism, but definite, concrete petition. The right way to approach God is to stretch out our hands and ask of One whom we know has the heart of a Father.

True prayer is done in secret, but this does not rule out corporate prayer altogether, however clearly we may be aware of its dangers. In the last resort it is immaterial whether we pray in the open street or in the secrecy of our chambers, in the Litany of the Church, or with the aspirations of one who knows not what he should pray for. True prayer does not depend either on the individual or the whole body of the faithful, but solely upon the knowledge that our heavenly Father knows our needs. That makes God the sole object of our prayers, and frees us from a false confidence in our own works.

Matt. vi. 9-15

Jesus told His disciples not only *how* to pray, but also *what* to pray. The Lord's Prayer is not merely the pattern prayer, it is the way Christians *must* pray. If they pray this prayer, God will certainly hear them. The Lord's Prayer is the quintessence of prayer. Every prayer of our own has its own

character and limitations. Once again Jesus does not leave His disciples in ignorance; He teaches them the Lord's Prayer and so leads them to a clear understanding of prayer.

"Our Father which art in heaven." The disciples call upon the heavenly Father as a corporate body, they call upon a Father who already knows His children's needs. The call of Jesus binds them into a brotherhood. In Jesus they have apprehended the loving-kindness of the Father. In the name of the Son of God they are privileged to call God Father. They are on earth, and their Father is in heaven. He looks down on them from above, and they lift up their eyes to Him.

"Hallowed be thy name." God's name of Father, as it has been revealed to the disciples in Jesus Christ, shall be kept holy among them. In this name the whole content of the Gospel is embraced. May God protect His holy gospel from being obscured and profaned by false doctrine and unholiness of life, and may He ever make known His holy name to the disciples in Jesus Christ. May He enable all preachers to proclaim the pure gospel of saving grace, defend us against heresy, and convert the enemies of His name!

"Thy kingdom come." In Jesus Christ His followers have witnessed the kingdom of God breaking in on earth. They have seen Satan crushed and the powers of the world, sin and death broken. The kingdom of God is still exposed to suffering and strife. The little flock has a share even in that tribulation. They stand under the sovereignty of God in the new righteousness, but in the midst of persecution. God grant that the kingdom of Jesus Christ may grow in His Church on earth, God hasten the end of the kingdom of this world, and establish His own kingdom in power and glory!

“Thy will be done, as in heaven so on earth.” In fellowship with Jesus His followers have surrendered their own wills completely to God’s, and so they pray that God’s will may be done throughout the world. No creature on earth shall defy Him. But the evil will is still alive even in the followers of Christ, it still seeks to cut them off from fellowship with Him; and that is why they must also pray that the will of God may prevail more and more in their hearts every day and break down all defiance. In the end the whole world must bow before that will, worshipping and giving thanks in joy and tribulation. Heaven and earth shall be subject to God.

God’s name, God’s kingdom, God’s will must be the primary object of Christian prayer. Of course it is not as if God needed our prayers, but they are the means by which the disciples become partakers in the heavenly treasure for which they pray. Furthermore, God uses their prayers to hasten the coming of the End.

“Give us this day our daily bread.” As long as the disciples are on earth, they are not ashamed to pray for their bodily needs. It is not God’s will that His creation should be despised. The disciples are told to ask for bread not only for themselves but for all men on the earth, for all men are their brethren. The disciples realize that while it is a fruit of the earth, bread really comes down from above as the gift of God alone. That is why they have to ask for it before they take it. And since it is the bread of God, it is new every day. They do not ask to lay up a store for the future, but are satisfied with what God gives them day by day. Through that bread their lives are spared a little longer, that they may enjoy fellowship with Jesus, praising and thanking Him for His loving-kindness. This petition is a test of their faith, for it shows whether they believe that all things work together for good to them that love God.

“Forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors.” Every day Christ’s followers must acknowledge and bewail their guilt. Living as they do in fellowship with Him, they ought to be sinless, but in practice their life is marred daily with all manner of unbelief, sloth in prayer, lack of bodily discipline, self-indulgence of every kind, envy, hatred and pride. No wonder that they must pray daily for God’s forgiveness. But God will only forgive them if they forgive one another with readiness and brotherly affection. Thus they bring all their guilt before God and pray as a body for forgiveness. God forgive not merely *me my* debts, but *us ours*.

“Lead us not into temptation.” Many and diverse are the temptations which beset the Christian. Satan attacks him on every side, if haply he might cause him to fall. Sometimes the attack takes the form of a false sense of security, and sometimes of ungodly doubt. But the disciple is conscious of his weakness, and does not expose himself unnecessarily to temptation in order to test the strength of his faith. Christians ask God not to put their puny faith to the test, but to preserve them in the hour of temptation.

“But deliver us from evil.” The last petition is for deliverance from evil and for the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. It is a prayer for a holy death and for the deliverance of the Church in the day of judgement.

“For thine is the kingdom . . .” The disciples are renewed in their assurance that the Kingdom is God’s by their fellowship in *Jesus Christ, on whom depends the fulfilment of all their prayers*. In Him God’s name is hallowed, His kingdom comes and His will is done. For His sake the disciples are spared from death, in His strength they are preserved in all times of temptation, in His power they are delivered and brought to eternal life. His is the kingdom and

the power and the glory for ever and ever in the unity of the Father. That is the assurance the disciples enjoy.

15. The Hiddenness of the Devout Life

Matt. vi. 16-18

JESUS takes it for granted that His disciples will observe the pious custom of fasting. Strict exercise of self-control is an essential feature of the Christian's life. Such customs have only one purpose—to make the disciples more ready and cheerful to accomplish those things which God would have done. Fasting helps to discipline the self-indulgent and slothful will which is so reluctant to serve the Lord, and it helps to humiliate and chasten the flesh. By practising self-control we show the world how different the Christian life is from its own. If there is no element of asceticism in our lives, if we give free rein to the desires of the flesh (taking care of course to keep within the limits of respectability), we shall find it hard to train for the service of Christ. When the flesh is satiated it is hard to pray with cheerfulness or to devote oneself to a life of service which calls for much self-renunciation.

So the Christian needs to observe a strict exterior discipline. But we are not to imagine that that alone will crush the will of the flesh, or that there is any way of mortifying our old man than by faith in Jesus. The real difference in the believer who follows Christ and has mortified his will and died after the old man in Christ, is that he is more clearly aware than other men of the rebelliousness and perennial pride of the flesh, he is conscious of his sloth and self-indulgence and knows that his arrogance must be eradicated. Hence there is a need for daily self-discipline. It is always true of the disciple that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak, and he must therefore “watch and pray.” The

spirit knows the right way, and desires to follow it, but the flesh lacks courage and finds it too hard, too hazardous

and wearisome, and so it stifles the voice of the spirit. The spirit assents when Jesus bids us love our enemies, but flesh and blood are too strong and prevent our carrying it out. Therefore we have to practise a daily discipline which goes beyond what may be reasonably expected; only so can the flesh learn the painful lesson that it has no rights of its own. Regular daily prayer is a great help here, and so is daily meditation on the word of God, and every kind of bodily discipline and asceticism.

The flesh resists this daily humiliation, first by a frontal attack, and later by hiding itself under the words of the spirit (i.e. in the name of “evangelical liberty”). We claim liberty from all legal compulsion, from self-martyrdom and mortification, and play this off against the proper evangelical use of discipline and asceticism; we thus excuse our self-indulgence and irregularity in prayer, in meditation and in our bodily life. But the contrast between our behaviour and the word of Jesus is all too painfully evident. We forget that discipleship means estrangement from the world, and we forget the real joy and freedom which are the outcome of a devout rule of life. When the Christian confesses to the sin of accidie (that he no longer readily embraces the will of God, that he is lapsing into worldliness, that all the joy has gone out of his communion with God and that he no longer has the strength to pray) it is high time for him to launch an assault upon the flesh, and prepare for better service by fasting and prayer (Luke ii. 37, iv. 2; Mark ix. 29; 1 Cor. vii. 5). Any objection that asceticism is wrong, and that all we need is faith, is quite beside the point; it is cruel to suggest such a thing, and it is no help to us at all. When all is said and done, the life of faith is nothing if not an unending struggle of the spirit with every available

weapon against the flesh. How is it possible to live the life of faith when we grow weary of prayer, when we lose our taste for reading the Bible, and when sleep, food and sensuality deprive us of the joy of communion with God?

Asceticism means voluntary suffering: it is *passio activa* rather than *passiva*, and it is just there that the danger lies.

There is always a danger that in our asceticism we shall be tempted to imitate the sufferings of Christ. This is a pious but godless ambition, for beneath it there always lurks the notion that it is possible for us to step into Christ's shoes and suffer as He did. We are then presuming to undertake that bitter work of eternal redemption which Christ Himself wrought for us. The motive of asceticism was more limits—to equip us for better service and deeper humiliation. But it can only do that so long as it takes the suffering of Christ as its basis; if not, it degenerates into a dreadful parody of the Lord's own passion. Our whole motive now becomes a desire for ostentation. We want other people to see our achievements and to be put to shame. Our asceticism has now become the way to salvation. Such publicity gives it the reward it seeks.

"Anoint thine head and wash thy face." Even this might become an occasion for a still subtler form of self-glorification or enjoyment. But that would be to miss the point and make of it a mere pretence. Jesus, however, bids His disciples to persevere in the practices of humiliation, but not to force them on other people as a rule or regulation. They must rejoice and give thanks for the privilege of remaining in the service of their Lord. Jesus does not mean that a smile on the face is to be a sort of stereotyped expression of Christianity; He is referring rather to the proper hiddenness of Christian behaviour, to that humility which is wholly unselfconscious, even as the eye can see

other people but can never see itself. Such hiddenness will one day be made manifest, but that will be God's doing, not ours.

16. The Simplicity of the Carefree Life

Matt. vi. 19-24

The life of discipleship can only be maintained so long as nothing is allowed to come between Christ and ourselves—neither the law, nor personal pity, nor even the world. The disciple always looks only to his Master, never to Christ *and* the law, Christ *and* religion, Christ *and* the world. He avoids all such notions like the plague. Only by following Christ alone can he preserve a single eye. His eye rests wholly in the light that comes from Christ, and has no darkness or ambiguity in it. As the eye must be single, clear and pure in order to keep light in the body, as hand and foot can receive light from no other source save the eye, as the foot stumbles and the hand misses its mark when the eye is dim, as the whole body is in darkness when the eye is blind; so the follower of Christ is in the light only so long as he looks simply to Christ and at nothing else in the world. Thus the heart of the disciple must be set upon Christ alone. If the eye sees an object which is not there, the whole body is deceived. If the heart is devoted to the mirage of the world, to the creature instead of the Creator, the disciple is lost.

Worldly possessions tend to turn the hearts of the disciples away from Jesus. What are we really devoted to? That is the question. Are our hearts set on earthly goods? Do we try to combine devotion to them with loyalty to Christ? Or are we devoted exclusively to Him? The light of the body is the eye, and the light of the Christian is his heart. If the eye be dark, how great is the darkness of the body! But the heart is dark

when it clings to earthly goods, for then, however urgently Jesus may call us, His call fails to find access to our hearts.

Our hearts are closed, for they have already been given to another. As the light cannot penetrate the body when the eye is evil, so the word of Jesus cannot penetrate the disciple's heart so long as it is closed against it. The word is choked like the seed which was sown among thorns, choked "with cares and riches and pleasures of this life" (Luke viii. 14).

The singleness of eye and heart corresponds to that "hiddenness" which knows nothing but the call and word of Christ, and which consists in perfect fellowship with Him. How can the disciple have dealings with earthly goods and yet preserve his singleness of heart? Jesus does not forbid the possession of property in itself. He was man, He ate and drank like His disciples, and thereby sanctified the good things of life. These necessities, which are consumed in use and which meet the legitimate requirements of the body, are to be used by the disciple with thankfulness.

We walk as pilgrims through the earth,

With empty hands, bereft and bare;

To gather wealth were little worth—

'Twould only burden life the more.

If men will go the way to death,

With them we will part company;

For God will give us all we need To cover our necessity.

(*Tersteegen*)

Earthly goods are given to be used, not that we might heap up riches. In the wilderness God gave Israel the manna every day, and they had no need to worry about food and drink. Indeed, if they kept any of the manna over until the next day, it went bad. In the same way, the disciple must receive his portion from God every day. If he stores it up as a permanent possession, he spoils not only the gift, but himself as well, for he sets his heart on his accumulated wealth, and makes it a barrier between himself and God.

Where our treasure is, there is our trust, our security, our consolation and our God.¹

But where are we to draw the line between legitimate use and unlawful accumulation? Let us reverse the word of Jesus and our question is answered: "Where thy heart is, there shall thy treasure be also." Our treasure may of course be small and inconspicuous, but its size is immaterial; it all depends on the heart, on ourselves. And if we ask how we are to know where our hearts are, the answer is just as simple—everything which hinders us from loving God above all things and acts as a barrier between ourselves and our obedience to Jesus is our treasure, and the place where our heart is.

But Jesus knows that the heart of man hankers after a treasure, and so it is His will that he should have one.² But this treasure is to be sought in heaven, not on earth. Earthly treasures soon fade, but a treasure in heaven lasts forever. By this treasure Jesus does not mean the one great treasure of Himself, but treasures in the literal sense of the word, treasures accumulated by the disciples for themselves. What a wonderful promise we have here: as we follow Jesus, we win heavenly treasures which are incorruptible; they are waiting for us, and one day we shall enjoy them as our own. Surely these treasures can be none other than the

“extraordinary”, the hidden character of the Christian life, none other than the fruits of the passion of Jesus Christ which sustains the lives of His followers.

If our hearts are entirely given to God, it is clear that we *cannot* serve two masters; it is simply impossible—at any rate all the time we are following Christ. It would of course be tempting to show how far we had advanced in the Christian life by endeavouring to serve two masters and giving

¹ It is no accident that the catalogues of vices in the Pauline Epistles associate fornication with covetousness, and designate both as idolatry.

² It is to be observed that Jesus does not deprive the human heart of its instinctive needs—treasure, glory and praise. But He gives it higher objects—the glory of God (John v. 44), the glorying in the cross (Gal. vi. 14), and the treasure in heaven.

each his due, both God and Mammon. Why should we not be happy children of the world just because we are the children of God? After all, do we not rejoice in His good gifts, and do we not receive our treasures as a blessing from Him? No, God and the world, God and its goods are incompatible because the world and its goods make a bid for our hearts, and only when they have won them do they become what they really are. That is how they thrive, and that is why they are incompatible with allegiance to God. Our hearts have room only for one all-embracing devotion, and we can only cleave to one Lord. Every competitor to that devotion must be hated. As Jesus says, there is no alternative—either we love God or we hate Him. We are confronted by an “either—or”: either we love God, or we love earthly goods. If we love God, we hate the world; and if we love the world, we hate

God. It makes no difference whether that love be conscious and deliberate or not; in fact it is morally certain that it will be neither, and that our conscious and deliberate desire will be to serve two masters, to love God *and* the good things of life. We shall indignantly repudiate the suggestion that we hate God, and will be firmly convinced that we love Him, whereas by trying to combine love for Him with love for the world, we are turning our love for Him into hatred. And then we have lost the single eye, and our heart is no longer in fellowship with Jesus. Our deliberate intentions make no difference to the inevitable result: Ye cannot serve two masters, if ye be followers of Jesus Christ.

Matt. vi. 25-34

Be not anxious! Earthly possessions dazzle our eyes and delude us into thinking that they can provide security and freedom from anxiety. Yet all the time they are the very source of all anxiety. If our hearts are set on them, our reward is an anxiety whose burden is intolerable. Anxiety creates its own treasures and they in turn beget further care. When we seek for security in possessions we are trying to drive out care with care, and the net result is the precise opposite of our anticipations. The fetters which bind us to our possessions prove to be cares themselves.

The way to misuse our possessions is to use them as an insurance against the morrow. Anxiety is always directed to the morrow, whereas goods are in the strictest sense meant to be used only for today. By trying to insure for the next day we are only creating uncertainty today. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. The only way to win assurance is by leaving tomorrow entirely in the hands of God and by receiving from Him all we need for today. If instead of receiving God's gifts for today we worry about tomorrow, we find ourselves helpless victims of infinite anxiety. "Be not

anxious for the morrow”: either that is cruel mockery for the poor and wretched, the very people Jesus is talking to (for humanly speaking everyone who does not worry about tomorrow’s food is bound to go hungry), either it is an intolerable law, which men will reject with indignation; or it is the unique proclamation of the gospel of the glorious liberty of the children of God, who have a Father in heaven, a Father who has given His beloved Son. How shall not God with Him also freely give us all things?

“Be not anxious for the morrow.” This is not to be taken as a piece of worldly wisdom or a moral law: it is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and only so can it be understood. Only those who follow Him and know Him personally can receive this word as a promise of the love of His Father and as a deliverance from the thralldom of material things. Only they know that we *cannot* be anxious (verse 27). The coming day, even the coming hour, are placed beyond our control. It is senseless to pretend that we can be anxious. Only God can be anxious, for it is He who rules the world. Since we *cannot* be anxious, since we are so completely powerless, we *ought* not to be anxious either. If we are, we are dethroning God and presuming to rule the world ourselves.

But the Christian also knows that he not only cannot and dare not be anxious, but that there is also no need for him to be so. Neither anxiety nor work can secure his daily bread, for bread is the gift of the Father. The birds and lilies neither toil nor spin, yet both are fed and clothed and receive their daily portion without being anxious for them. They need earthly goods only for their daily sustenance, and they have no need to lay up a store for the future. This is the way they glorify their Creator, not by their industry, toil or care, but by a daily unquestioning acceptance of His gifts. Birds and lilies then are an example for the followers of Christ. “Man-in-revolt” imagines that there is a relation of cause and effect

between work and sustenance, but Jesus explodes that illusion. According to Him, bread is not to be valued as the reward for work; He speaks instead of the carefree simplicity of the man who walks with Him and accepts everything as it comes from God.

“Now mark ye, no beast worketh for his sustenance, but each hath his proper function, according to which he seeketh and findeth his own food. The bird doth fly and sing, she maketh nests and beareth young. That is her work, but yet she doth not nourish herself thereby. Oxen plough, horses draw carts and fight, sheep give wool, milk, and cheese, for it is their function so to do. But they do not nurture themselves thereby. Nay, the earth bringeth forth grass, and nurtureth them through God’s blessing. Likewise it is man’s bounden duty to work and do things, and yet withal to know that it is Another who n :tureth him: it is not his own work, but the bounteous blessing of God. It is true that the bird doth neither sow nor reap, yet would she die of hunger if she flew not in search of food. But that she findeth the same is not her work, but the goodness of God. For who put the food there, that she might find it? For where God hath put nought, none findeth, even though the whole world were to work itself to death in search thereof” (Luther). But if the Creator thus sustains the birds and lilies, should He not much more as a Father nourish His own children, who daily pray to Him? Should He not be able to grant them the necessities of life, when all earthly goods belong to Him, and when He can distribute them according to His pleasure?

God the Father grant to me All my daily needs.

Why should I not unto Him flee,

When all the birds He feeds?

(*Claudius*)

Anxiety is characteristic of the Gentiles, for they rely on their own strength and power instead of relying on God. They do not know that the Father knows that we have need of all these things, and so they try to do for themselves what they do not expect from God. But the disciples know that the rule is "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Anxiety for food and clothing is clearly not the same thing as anxiety for the kingdom of God, however much we should like to persuade ourselves that when we are working for our families and concerning ourselves with bread and houses we are thereby building the kingdom, as though the kingdom could be realized only through our worldly cares. The kingdom of God and His righteousness are sharply distinguished from the gifts of the world which come our way. That kingdom is none other than the righteousness of Matthew v and vi, the righteousness of the cross and of following Christ beneath that cross. Fellowship with Jesus and obedience to His commandment come first, and all else follows. Worldly cares are not a part of our discipleship, but distinct and subordinate concerns. Before we start taking thought for our life, our food and clothing, our work and families, we must seek the righteousness of Christ. This is no more than a bare summary of all that has been said before. Again we have here either a crushing burden, which holds out no hope for the poor and wretched, or else it is the quintessence of the gospel, which brings the promise of freedom and perfect joy. Jesus does not tell us what we ought to do but cannot; He tells us what God has given us and promises still to give. And with Him we are given all things, literally *all* things. He will see to it that they are added unto us. If we follow Jesus and look only to His righteousness, we are in His hands and under the protection of Him and His Father. And if we are in communion with the

Father, nought can harm us. We shall always be assured that He can feed His children and will not suffer them to hunger. God will help us in the hour of need, and He knows our needs.

After He has been following Christ for a long time, the disciple of Jesus will be asked “Lacked ye anything?”, and he will answer “Nothing, Lord”. How could he when he knows that despite hunger and nakedness, persecution and danger, the Lord is always at His side?

17. The Disciple and Unbelievers

Matt. vii. x-12

THERE IS A CONTINUOUS THREAD RUNNING THROUGH CHAPTERS V AND VI; IT PASSES THROUGH THESE VERSES, AND ON TO THE GRAND FINALE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT. CHAPTER V DEALT WITH THE EXTRAORDINARY QUALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, AND CHAPTER VI WITH THE HIDDEN SINGLE-HEARTED RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE DISCIPLES (CNR AoOs). IN BOTH ITS ASPECTS, DISCIPLESHIP BETOKENED THE SEPARATION OF THE DISCIPLES FROM ALL THEIR OLD TIES, AND AN EXCLUSIVE ADHERENCE TO JESUS CHRIST. THE FRONTIER BETWEEN THE OLD LIFE AND THE NEW WAS CLEARLY DRAWN. BUT THIS RAISES THE QUESTION OF THE RELATION BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND THEIR NON-CHRISTIAN NEIGHBOURS. DOES THEIR SEPARATION FROM THE REST OF SOCIETY CONFER ON THEM SPECIAL RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES? DO CHRISTIANS ENJOY POWER, GIFTS AND STANDARDS OF JUDGEMENT WHICH QUALIFY THEM TO EXERT A PECULIAR AUTHORITY OVER OTHERS? HOW EASY IT WOULD HAVE BEEN FOR THE DISCIPLES TO ADOPT A SUPERIOR ATTITUDE, TO PASS UNQUALIFIED CONDEMNATION ON THE REST OF THE WORLD, AND TO PERSUADE THEMSELVES THAT THIS WAS THE WILL OF GOD! THAT IS WHY JESUS HAS TO MAKE IT CLEAR BEYOND ALL DOUBT THAT SUCH MISUNDERSTANDINGS WOULD SERIOUSLY IMPERIL THEIR DISCIPLESHIP. THE DISCIPLES ARE NOT TO JUDGE. IF THEY DO SO, THEY WILL THEMSELVES BE JUDGED BY GOD. THE SWORD WHEREWITH THEY JUDGE THEIR BRETHREN WILL FALL UPON THEIR OWN HEADS. INSTEAD OF CUTTING THEMSELVES OFF FROM THEIR BROTHER, THEY FIND THEMSELVES CUT OFF FROM JESUS.

Why should this be so? The source of the disciple's life lies exclusively in his association with Jesus Christ. He possesses his righteousness only within that association, never outside it. That is why his righteousness can never become an objective criterion to be applied at will. He is a

disciple not because he possesses such a new standard, but only because of Jesus Christ, the Mediator and very Son of

God. That is to say, his righteousness is hidden from himself and possessed in fellowship with Jesus. He cannot, as he could once, be a detached observer of himself and judge himself, for he can only see Jesus, and be seen by Him, judged by Him, and endued with grace by Him. Again, there is no standard of judgement with which to judge a nondisciple, for between them there is only Jesus Christ. Christians always see other men as brethren to whom Christ comes; they meet them only by going to them with Jesus. Disciple and non-disciple can never encounter each other as free men, directly exchanging their views and judging one another by objective criteria. No, the disciple can meet the non-disciple only as a man to whom Jesus comes. Only so can he woo and win the other man for Christ, only so can he share with him the call and love, the grace and judgement which he enjoys himself. Discipleship does not afford us a point of vantage from which to attack others; we come to them with an unconditional offer of fellowship, with the sincerity of the love of Jesus.

When we judge the non-disciple we confront him in a spirit of detachment, observing and reflecting on him as it were from the outside. But love has neither time nor opportunity for this. If we love, we can never observe the nondisciple with detachment, for he is always and at every moment the living embodiment of God's claim to our love and service. But love does enable us to avoid the wrong kind of reflection on the characters of others; if we love, we can proceed to forgive them, thus showing to them the same unconditional love which Jesus shows to us. To withhold judgement in this way is something quite different from *tout comprendre, c'est tout pardonner*. We are not excusing them; it is not as though we or the other man were thereby justified. For only God is justified and, by refraining from judgement, we proclaim His grace and judgement.

Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating. By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which others are just as entitled to as we are. But in the love of Christ we know all about every conceivable sin and guilt; for we know how Jesus suffered, and how all men have been forgiven at the foot of the cross. This gives love its true insight. If when we judged others, our real motive was to destroy evil, we should look for evil where it is certain to be found, and that is in our own hearts. But if we are on the look-out for evil in others, our real motive is obviously to justify ourselves, for we are seeking to escape punishment for our own sins by passing judgement on others, and are assuming by implication that the word of God applies to ourselves in one way, and to others in another. All this is highly dangerous and misleading. We are trying to claim for ourselves a special privilege which we deny to others.

But the Christian is not only forbidden to *judge* other men: even the word of salvation has its limits. He has neither power nor right to force it on other men in season and out of season. Every attempt to impose the gospel by force, to run after people and proselytize them, to use our own resources to arrange the salvation of other people, is both futile and dangerous. It is futile, because it is wrong to cast pearls before swine, and dangerous, because it profanes the word of forgiveness, by causing those we fain would serve to sin against that which is holy. Worse still, we shall only meet with the blind rage of hardened and darkened hearts, and that will be useless and harmful. Our easy trafficking with the word of cheap grace simply bores the world to disgust, so that in the end it turns against those who try to force on it what it does not want. Thus a strict limit is placed upon the activities of the disciples, just as in Matt. x they are told to shake the dust off their feet where the word is refused a hearing. Their restless energy which refuses to recognize any limit to their activity, the zeal which refuses to take note

of resistance, springs from a confusion of the gospel with a victorious ideology. An ideology requires fanatics, who neither know nor notice opposition, and it is certainly a potent force. But the word of God in its weakness takes the risk of meeting the scorn of men and being rejected. There are hearts which are hardened and doors which are closed to the word. The word recognizes opposition when it meets it, and is prepared to suffer under it. It is a hard lesson, but a true one, that the gospel, unlike an ideology, reckons with impossibilities. The word is weaker than any ideology, and this means that with the word in their hands the witnesses are weaker than the propagandists of an opinion. But although they are weak, they are ready to suffer with the word and so are free from that morbid restlessness which is so characteristic of fanaticism.

The disciples can even yield their ground and run away, provided they do so with the word, provided their weakness is the weakness of the word, and provided they do not leave the word in the lurch in their flight. They are simply the servants and instruments of the word; they have no wish to be strong where the word chooses to be weak. To try and force the word on the world by hook or by crook is to make the living word of God into a mere idea, and the world would be perfectly justified in refusing to listen to an idea which did not appeal to it. But at other times, the disciples must stick to their guns and refuse to run away, though of course only when the word so wills. If they do not realize this weakness of the word, they have failed to perceive the mystery of the divine condescension. The same weak word which is content to endure the gainsaying of sinners is also the mighty word of mercy which can convert the hearts of sinners. Its strength is veiled in weakness, and will remain so until the judgement day. The great task of the disciples is to recognize the limits of their commission. But if they use the word amiss it will certainly turn against them.

What are the disciples to do when they encounter opposition and cannot penetrate the hearts of men? They must admit that in no circumstances do they possess any rights or powers over others, and that they have no direct access to them. The only way to reach others is through Him in whose hands they are themselves like all other men. We shall hear more about this as we proceed. The disciples are taught to pray, and so they learn that the only way to reach others is by praying to God. Judgement and forgiveness are always in the hands of God. He closes and He opens. But the disciples must ask, they must seek and knock, and then God will hear them. They have to learn that their anxiety and concern for others must drive them to their knees. The promise Christ gives to their prayer is the doughtiest weapon in their armoury.

The difference between the disciples' seeking and the Gentiles' quest for God is that the disciples know what they are looking for. We can only seek God when we know Him. How can you look for something or find it if you do not know what you are looking for? The disciples seek a God whom they have found in the promise they have received from Jesus.

To sum up: it is clear from the foregoing that the disciple has no special privilege or power of his own in all his intercourse with others. The mainspring of his life and work is the strength which comes from fellowship with Jesus Christ. Jesus offers His disciples a simple rule of thumb which will enable even the least sophisticated of them to tell whether his intercourse with others is on the right lines or not. All he needs do is to reverse the relation of I and Thou, and put himself in the other man's place. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets." The moment he does that, the disciple forfeits all advantage over other men,

and can no longer excuse in himself what he condemns in others. He is as strict in condemning evil in himself as he was before with others, and as lenient with the evil in others as he was before to himself. There is only *one* judgement, *one* law, and *one* grace. Henceforth the disciple will look upon other men as forgiven sinners who owe their lives to the love of God. “This is the law and the prophets”—for this is none other than the supreme commandment: to love God above all things and our neighbours as ourselves.

18. The Great Divide

Matt. vii. 13-23

THE Church of Jesus cannot arbitrarily break off all contact with those who refuse His call. It is called to follow the Lord by promise and commandment. That must suffice. All judgement of others and separation from them must be left to Him who chose the Church according to His good purpose, and not for any merit or achievement of its own. The separation of Church and world is not effected by the Church itself, but by the word of its calling.

A little band of men, the followers of Christ, are separated from the rest of the world. The disciples are few in number, and will always be few. This saying of Jesus forestalls all exaggerated hopes of success. Never let a disciple of Jesus pin his hopes on large numbers. “Few there be . . .” The rest of the world are many, and will always be many. But they are on the road to perdition. The only comfort the disciples have in face of this prospect is the promise of life and eternal fellowship with Jesus.

The path of discipleship is narrow, and it is fatally easy to miss one’s way and stray from the path, even after years of discipleship. And it is hard to find. On either side of the

narrow path deep chasms yawn. To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way. To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same time to love the enemies of that truth, His enemies and ours, and to love them with the infinite love of Jesus Christ, is indeed a narrow way. To believe the promise of Jesus that His followers shall possess the earth, and at the same time to face our enemies unarmed and defenceless, preferring to incur injustice rather than to do wrong ourselves, is indeed a narrow way. To see the weakness and wrong in others, and at the same time

refrain from judging them; to deliver the gospel message without casting pearls before swine, is indeed a narrow way. The way is unutterably hard, and at every moment we are in danger of straying from it. If we regard this way as one we follow in obedience to an external command, if we are afraid of ourselves all the time, it is indeed an impossible way. But if we behold Jesus Christ going on before step by step, if we only look to Him and follow Him, step by step, we shall not go astray. But if we worry about the dangers that beset us, if we gaze at the road instead of at Him who goes before, we are already straying from the path. For He is Himself the way, the narrow way and the strait gate. He, and He alone, is our journey's end. When we know that, we are able to proceed along the narrow way through the strait gate of the cross, and on to eternal life, and the very narrowness of the road will increase our certainty. The way which the Son of God trod on earth, and the way which we too must tread as citizens of two worlds on the razor edge between this world and the kingdom of heaven, could hardly be a broad way. The narrow way is bound to be right.

Verses 15-20. The separation of Church and world is now complete. But the word of Jesus forces its way into the

Church herself, bringing judgement and decision. The separation is never permanently assured: it must constantly be renewed. The disciples of Jesus must not fondly imagine that they can simply run away from the world and huddle together in a little band. False prophets will rise up among them, and amid the ensuing confusion they will feel more isolated than ever. There is someone standing by my side, who looks just like a member of the Church. He is a prophet and a preacher. He looks like a Christian, he talks and acts like one. But dark powers are mysteriously at work, it was these who sent him into our midst. Inwardly he is a ravening wolf: his words are lies and his works are full of deceit. He knows only too well how to keep his secret dark, and go ahead with his work. It is not faith in Jesus Christ which made him one of us, but the devil. Maybe he hopes his intellectual ability or his success as a prophet will bring him power and influence, money and fame. His ambitions are set on the world, not on Jesus Christ. Knowing that Christians are credulous people, he conceals his dark purpose beneath the cloak of Christian piety, hoping that his innocuous disguise will avert detection. He knows that Christians are forbidden to judge, and he will remind them of it at the appropriate time. After all, other men's hearts are always a closed book. Thus he succeeds in seducing many from the right way. He may even be unconscious himself of what he is doing. The devil can give him every encouragement and at the same time keep him in the dark.

No wonder the disciples were troubled by these words. Who knows his neighbour? Who knows whether the outward appearance of a Christian conceals falsehood and deception underneath? No wonder if mistrust, suspicion and censoriousness creep into the Church. And no wonder if every brother who falls into sin incurs the uncharitable criticism of his brethren, now that Jesus has said this. All this distrust would ruin the Church but for the word of Jesus

which assures us that the bad tree will bring forth bad fruit. It is bound to give itself away sooner or later. There is no need to go about prying into the hearts of others. All we need do is to wait until the tree bears fruit, and we shall not have to wait long. This is not to say that we must draw a distinction between the words of the prophet and his deeds: the real distinction is that between appearance and reality. Jesus tells us that men cannot keep up appearances for long. The time of vintage is sure to come, and then we shall be able to sift the good from the bad. Sooner or later we shall find out where a man stands. It is no use the tree refusing to bear any fruit, for the fruit comes of its own accord. Any day the time may come to decide for the world or for the Church. We may have to decide, not in some spectacular matter, but in quite trivial, everyday affairs. And then we shall see and discern the good from the bad. In that day the reality will stand the test, not appearances.

In such times as these, Jesus requires His disciples to distinguish between appearance and reality, between themselves and pseudo-Christians. They will then rise above all inquisitive examination of others, but they will need a sincere determination to recognize the verdict of God when it comes. At any moment the nominal Christians may be separated from the real ones. We may even find that we are nominal Christians ourselves. Here is a challenge to closer fellowship with Jesus and to a more loyal discipleship. The bad tree is cut down and cast into the fire. All its display of finery proves ultimately to be of no avail.

Verse 21. The separation which the call of Jesus creates goes deeper still. After the division between Church and world, between nominal Christians and real ones, the division now enters into the very heart of the confessional body. St. Paul says: "No man can say, Jesus is Lord, but in the Holy Spirit" (1 Cor. xii. 3). It is impossible to surrender our lives to Jesus

or call him Lord of our own free will. St. Paul is deliberately reckoning with the possibility that men may call Jesus Lord without the Holy Spirit, that is, without having received the call. It was harder to understand this in days when it brought no earthly gain to be a Christian and when Christianity was a dangerous profession. “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven . . .” “Lord, Lord” is the Church’s confession of faith. But not everyone who makes this confession will enter the kingdom of heaven. The dividing line will run right through the confessing Church. Even if we make the confession of faith, it gives us no title to any special claim upon Jesus. We can never appeal to our confession or be saved simply on the ground that we have made it. Neither is the fact that we are members of a Church which has a right confession a claim to God’s favour. To think thus is to fall into the sin of Israel, which thought the grace of God’s call gave it a special privilege in His sight. God will not ask us in that day whether we were good Lutherans, but whether we have done His will. We shall be asked the same question as everybody else. The Church is marked off from the world not by a special privilege, but by the gracious election and calling of God.

lías o Aeycov and aAA’ o ttoicov, “say” and “do”—this does not mean the ordinary contrast between word and deed, but two different relations between man and God. ‘O Aeycov Kupis—the man who says “Lord, Lord”—means the man who puts forward a claim on the ground that he has said “Yes”, o ttoicov—the doer—is the man of humble obedience. The first is the one who justifies himself through his confession, and the second, the doer, the obedient man who builds his life on the grace of God. Here a man’s speaking denotes self-righteousness, his doing is a token of grace, to which there can be no other response save that of humble and obedient service. The mag who says “Lord, Lord” has either called himself to Jesus without the Holy Spirit, or else he has made out of the call of Jesus a personal privilege. But our doer of

the will of God is called and endued with grace, he obeys and follows. He understands his call not as a privilege, but as an act of God's judgement and grace, as the will of God, which alone he must obey. The grace of Jesus is a demand upon the doer, and so his doing becomes the true humility, the right faith, and the right confession of the grace of the God who calls.

Verse 22. Confessor and doer are separated from one another. And now the division is carried to its furthest extent. Only those are now speaking who have survived the test so far. They are numbered among the doers, but they appeal not to their confession, but to the deeds they have done. They have performed deeds in the name of Jesus. They know that confession does not justify, and so they have gone and made the name of Jesus great among the people by their deeds. Now they appear before Jesus and tell Him what they have done.

At this point Jesus reveals to His disciples the possibility of a demonic faith which produces wonderful works quite indistinguishable from the works of the true disciples, works of charity, miracles, perhaps even of personal sanctification, but which is nevertheless a denial of Jesus and of the life of discipleship. This is just what St. Paul means in I Corinthians xiii, when he says that it is possible to preach, to prophesy, to have all knowledge, and even faith so as to remove mountains, and all this without love, that is to say, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit. More than this, St. Paul must even reckon with the possibility that the very works of Christian charity, giving away one's goods, and even martyrdom, may be done without love, without Christ, without the Holy Spirit. Without love: that is to say, in all this activity the activity of discipleship is absent, namely that activity the doer of which is in the last resort none other than Jesus Christ Himself. Here is the most serious, most

incredible satanic possibility in the Church, the final division, which only occurs at the last day. But Christ's followers must ask by what ultimate criterion Jesus will accept or reject them. Who will pass the test, and who will not? The answer lies in the words of Jesus to the last of the rejected: "I have never known you." Here we are at last, here is the secret we have been waiting for since the Sermon on the Mount began. Here is the crucial question—has Jesus known us or not? First came the division between Church and world, then the division within the Church, and then the final division on the last day. There is nothing left for us to cling to, not even our confession or our obedience. There is only His word: "I have known thee", which is His eternal word and call. The end of the Sermon on the Mount echoes the beginning. The word of the last judgement is foreshadowed in the call to follow. But from beginning to end it is always *His* word and *His* call, His alone. If we follow Christ, cling to His word, and let everything else go, we shall find support in this word at the day of judgement. His word is His grace.

19. The Conclusion

Matt. vii. 24-9

WE HAVE LISTENED TO THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, AND PERHAPS HAVE UNDERSTOOD IT. BUT WHO HAS HEARD IT ARIGHT? JESUS GIVES THE ANSWER IN HIS PERORATION. HE DOES NOT ALLOW HIS HEARERS TO GO AWAY AND MAKE OF HIS SAYINGS WHAT THEY WILL, PICKING AND CHOOSING FROM THEM WHATEVER THEY FIND HELPFUL, AND TESTING THEM TO SEE IF THEY WORK. HE DOES NOT GIVE THEM FREE REIN TO MISUSE HIS WORD WITH THEIR CLUMSY HANDS, BUT GIVES IT TO THEM ON CONDITION THAT IT RETAINS EXCLUSIVE POWER OVER THEM. HUMANLY SPEAKING, WE COULD UNDERSTAND AND INTERPRET THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT IN A THOUSAND DIFFERENT WAYS. JESUS KNOWS ONLY ONE POSSIBILITY: SIMPLE SURRENDER AND OBEDIENCE, NOT INTERPRETING IT OR APPLYING IT, BUT DOING AND OBEYING IT. THAT IS THE ONLY

WAY TO HEAR HIS WORD. BUT AGAIN HE DOES NOT MEAN THAT IT IS TO BE DISCUSSED AS AN IDEAL, HE MEANS REALLY PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE.

This word, whose claim we recognize, this word which issues from His saying “I have known thee”, this word which sets us at once to work and obedience, is the rock on which to build our house. The only proper response to this word which Jesus brings with Him from eternity is simply to do it. Jesus has spoken: His is the word, ours the obedience. Only in the doing of it does the word of Jesus retain its honour, might and power among us. Now the storm can rage over the house, but it cannot shatter that union with Him, which His word has created.

There is only one other possibility, that of failing to do it. It is impossible to want to do it and yet not do it. To deal with the word of Jesus otherwise than by doing it is to wrong Him. It is to deny the Sermon on the Mount and to say No to His word. If we start asking questions, posing problems, and offering interpretations, we are not doing His word. Once

again the shades of the rich young man and the lawyer of Luke x are raising their heads. However vehemently we assert our faith, and our fundamental recognition of His word, Jesus still calls it “not-doing”. But the word which we fail to do is no rock to build a house on. There can then be no union with Jesus. He has never known us. That is why as soon as the hurricane begins we lose the word, and find that we have never really believed it. The word we had was not Christ’s, but a word we had wrested from Him and made our own by reflecting on it instead of doing it. So our house crashes in ruins, because it is not founded on the word of Jesus Christ.

“The multitudes were astonished. . . .” What had happened? The Son of God had spoken. He had taken the judgement of

the world into His own hands. And His disciples were standing at His side.

III

THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE LIFE OF DISCIPLESHIP

20. Baptism

In the Synoptic Gospels the relationship between the disciples and their Lord is expressed almost entirely in terms of following Him. In the Pauline Epistles this conception recedes into the background. In the first place St. Paul has far less to say about the earthly life of our Lord, and far more about the presence of the risen and glorified Christ and His work in us. He therefore needs a new set of terms peculiar to himself. The terms St. Paul uses confirm those of the Synoptists, and *vice versa*. Neither set of terms is intrinsically preferable to the other. After all, we are not “of Paul, or of Apollos, or of Cephas, or of Christ”. Our faith rests upon the unity of the scriptural testimony. It is destructive of the unity of the Scriptures to say that the Pauline Christ is more alive for us than the Christ of the Synoptists. Of course such language is commonly regarded as genuine Reformation and historico-critical doctrine, but it is in fact the precise opposite of that, and indeed it is the most perilous kind of fanaticism. Who tells us that the Pauline Christ is as alive for us today as He was for St. Paul? Who tells us that Christ is present for us in a different manner from what He was in the Scriptures? Perhaps this is just the point where we ought to fall back on the notion of a presence of Christ which is free and unbound by the word. No, the Scriptures are the only witness we have of Christ’s presence, and that witness is a unity, which also means that the presence they speak of includes the presence of Jesus

Christ as He is presented in the Synoptic Gospels. The Jesus of the Synoptists is neither nearer nor further from us than the Christ of St. Paul. The Christ who is there present is the Christ of the whole Scripture. He is the incarnate, crucified, risen, and glorified Christ, and He meets us in His word. The difference between the terminology of the Synoptists and the witness of St. Paul does not involve any breach in the unity of the Scriptural testimony.¹

Where the synoptic Gospels speak of Christ calling men and their following Him, St. Paul speaks of *Baptism*.

Baptism is not an offer made by man to God, but an offer made by Christ to man. It is grounded solely on the will of Jesus Christ, as expressed in His gracious call. Baptism is essentially passive—*being baptized, suffering* the call of Christ. In baptism man becomes Christ's own possession. When the name of Christ is spoken over the candidate, he becomes a partaker in this Name, and is baptized "*into* Jesus Christ" (see Rom. vi. 3; Gal. iii. 27; Matt. xxviii. 19). From that moment he belongs to Jesus Christ. He is wrested

¹ The direct testimony of the Scriptures is frequently confounded with ontological propositions. This error is the essence of fanaticism in all its forms. For example, if we take the statement that Christ is risen as an ontological proposition, it inevitably dissolves the unity of the Scriptures, for it leads us to speak of a mode of Christ's presence which is different e.g. from that of the synoptic Jesus. The truth that Jesus Christ is risen and present to us is then taken as an independent statement with an ontological significance which can be applied critically to other ontological statements, and it is thus exalted into a theological principle. This procedure is analogous to the fanatical doctrine of

perfectionism, which arises from a similar ontological misunderstanding of the scriptural utterances on the subject of sanctification. In this instance the assertion that he who is in God does not sin is made a starting-point for further speculation. But this is to tear it from its scriptural context and raise it to the status of an independent truth which can be experienced. The proclamation of the scriptural testimony is of quite a different character. The assertion that Christ is risen and, present, is, when taken strictly as a testimony given in the scriptures, true only as a word of the scriptures. This word is the object of our faith. There is no other conceivable way of approach to this truth except through this word. But this word testifies to the presence of both the Synoptic and the Pauline Christ. Our nearness to the one or to the other is defined solely by the word, i.e. by the scriptural testimony. Of course this is not to deny the obvious fact that the Pauline testimony and that of the Synoptists differ in respect both of their object and their terminology, but both have to be interpreted in the light of the scriptures as a whole.

This conclusion is not merely a piece of *a priori* knowledge based on a rigid doctrine of the canon of scripture. The legitimacy of our view must be put to the test in every instance. Thus in the ensuing argument, our purpose is to show how St. Paul takes up the synoptic notion of following Christ and subjects it to further development.

from the dominion of the world, and passes into the ownership of Christ.

Baptism therefore betokens a *breach*. Christ invades the realm of Satan, lays hands on His own, and creates for Himself His Church. By this act past and present are rent asunder. The old order is passed away, and all things have become new. This breach is not effected by man's tearing off his own chains through some insatiable desire for a new life of freedom. The breach has been effected by Christ long before, and in baptism it is effected in our own lives, as in the lives of others before us. We are now deprived of our direct relationship with all the God-given realities of life. Christ the Mediator has stepped in between us and them. The baptized Christian has ceased to belong to the world and is no longer its slave. He belongs to Christ alone, and his relationship with the world is mediated through Him.

The breach with the world is complete. It demands and produces the death of the old man.¹ In baptism a man dies together with his old world. This death, no less than baptism itself, is a passive event. It is not as though a man must achieve his own death through various kinds of renunciation and mortification. That would never be the death of the old man which Christ demands. The old man cannot will his own death or kill himself. He can only die in, through and with Christ. Christ is his death. For the sake of fellowship with Christ, and in that fellowship alone, a man dies. In fellowship with Christ and through the grace of baptism he receives his death as a gift.¹ This death is a gift of grace: a man can never accomplish it by himself. The old man and his sin are judged and condemned, and out of this judgement a new man arises, who has died to the world and to sin. Thus this death is not the act of a Creator finally rejecting His

¹ Even Jesus Himself referred to His death as a baptism, and promised that His disciples would share this baptism of death (Mark x. 39; Luke xii. 50).

creation in His wrath, but the gracious death which has been won for us by the death of Christ. It is death in the power and fellowship of the cross of Christ. He who becomes Christ's own possession must submit to His cross, and suffer and die with Him. He who is granted fellowship with Jesus must die the baptismal death which is the fountain of grace. It is this death which makes the cross which Christ lays upon His disciples. The cross and death of Christ were cruel and hard but the yoke of our cross is easy and light because of our fellowship with Him. The cross of Christ is the death which we undergo once and for all in our baptism, and it is a death full of grace. The cross to which we are called is a daily dying in the power of the death which Christ died once and for all. In this way baptism means sharing in the cross of Christ (Rom. vi. 3 ff. | Col. ii. 12). The believer passes under the yoke of the cross.

Baptismal death means *justification from sin*. The sinner must die that he may be delivered from his sin. If a man dies he is justified from sin (Rom. vi. 7; Col. ii. 20). Sin has no further claim on him, for death's demand has been met, and its account settled. Forgiveness of sin does not mean that the sin is overlooked and forgotten, it means a real death on the part of the sinner and his separation from (onro) sin. But the only reason why the sinner's death can bring justification and not condemnation is that this death is a sharing of the death of Christ. It is baptism into the death of Christ which effects the forgiveness of sin and justification, and completes our separation from sin. The fellowship of the cross to which Jesus invited His disciples is the gift of justification through that cross, it is the gift of death and of the forgiveness of sins. The disciple who followed in the fellowship of the cross received exactly the same gift as the believer who was baptized after he had heard the teaching of St. Paul.

Although for the candidate baptism is a passive event, it is never a mechanical process. This is made abundantly clear by the connection of baptism with the Spirit. (Matt. iii. 11; Acts x. 47; John iii. 5; 1 Cor. vi. 11-13). The gift of baptism is the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is Christ Himself dwelling in the hearts of the faithful (2 Cor. iii. 17; Rom. viii. 9-11₅ 14 ff-| Eph. iii. 16 /.). The baptized are the house where the Holy Spirit has made His dwelling (oka). The Spirit is the pledge of the abiding presence of Jesus, and of our fellowship with Him. He imparts true knowledge of His being (1 Cor. ii. 10) and of His will, He teaches us and reminds us of all that Christ said on earth (John xiv. 26). He guides us into all truth (John xvi. 13), so that we are not without knowledge of Christ and of the gifts which God has given us in Him (1 Cor. ii. 12; Eph. i. 9). The gift which the Holy Spirit creates in us is not uncertainty, but assurance and discernment. Thus we are enabled to walk in the Spirit (Gal. v. 16, 18, 25; Rom. viii. 1, 4), and to take certain steps in a forward direction. The certainty which the disciples enjoyed in their intercourse with Jesus was not lost after He left them. Through the mission of the Spirit into the hearts of the believers that certainty is not only perpetuated, but strengthened and increased, so intimate is the fellowship of the Spirit (Rom. viii. 16; John xvi. 12 /.).

When He called men to follow Him, Jesus was summoning them to a *visible act of obedience*. To follow Jesus was a public event. Baptism is similarly a public event, for it is the means whereby a member is grafted on to the visible body of Christ (Gal. iii. 27 /.; 1 Cor. xii. 13). The breach with the world which has been effected in Christ can no longer remain hidden; it must come out into the open through membership of the Church and participation in its life and worship. When he joins the Church the Christian steps out of the world, leaving his work and family cares, and taking his stand visibly in the fellowship of Jesus Christ. He takes this

step alone. But he recovers what he has surrendered—brothers, sisters, houses, and fields. Those who have been baptized live in the visible community of Christ. We shall endeavour to draw out the full import of this statement in the next two chapters, the first of which deals with the “Body of Christ” and the second with the “Visible Community”.

Baptism and the gifts it confers are characterized by a certain finality. The baptism of Christ can never be repeated.¹ It is just this finality which the Epistle to the Hebrews is trying to express in that obscure passage about the impossibility of a second repentance after baptism and conversion (Heb. vi. 4 *ff.*). By baptism we are made partakers in the death of Christ. Through our baptismal death we have been condemned to death and have died, just as Christ died once and for all. Now we are dead. The daily dying of the Christian life is merely the consequence of the one baptismal death, just as the tree dies after its roots have been cut away. Henceforth the law which governs the life of the baptized is: “Likewise reckon ye yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom. vi. n). From now on the baptized can know themselves only as dead men, in whom everything necessary for salvation has already been accomplished. The baptized live, not by a literal repetition of this death, but by a constant renewal of their faith in the death of Christ as His act of grace in us. The source of their faith lies in the once-and-for-allness of Christ’s death, which they have experienced in their baptism.

This element of finality in baptism throws significant light on the question of infant baptism.² The problem is not whether infant baptism is baptism at all, but that the final and unrepeatable character of infant baptism necessitates certain restrictions in its use. It was certainly not a sign of a healthy church life in the second century when believing

Christians deferred their baptism until they reached old age or were on their death beds, but all the same it shows a clear insight into the nature of baptismal grace, an insight which we sadly lack today. As far as infant baptism is concerned, it must be insisted that the sacrament should be administered only where there is a reasonable chance of the

¹ Contrast the baptism of John, which must be renewed through baptism into Christ (Act xix. 5).

² To the usual passages quoted as evidence for the practice of infant baptism in New Testament times, we may perhaps add 1 John ii. 12 ff. The use of the three forms of address—children, fathers, and young men—would seem to justify our taking *tekvio* in verse 12 not as a general term for the Christian community, but as a reference to “children” in the literal sense of the word.

child's growing up to renew his faith in the *opus dei* which was accomplished once and for all when he was baptized. That can only happen in a Christian community which is really alive. To baptize infants without bringing them up in the life of the Church is not only an abuse of the sacrament, it betokens a disgusting frivolity in dealing with the souls of the children themselves. For baptism can never be repeated.

The call of Jesus was no less final and unrepeatable for those who heard it in the days of His earthly life. When men followed Him they died to their previous life. That is why He expected them to leave all that they had. The irrevocable nature of the decision was thus put beyond all doubt. But it also showed how complete and entire was the gift they had received from their Lord. “If the salt have lost its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?” No clearer expression could be given to the finality of the gift of Jesus than this. Having

taken their life from them, He sought to confer on them a new life, a life so perfect and complete that He gave them the gift of His cross. That is how the gift of baptism was conveyed to the first disciples.

21. The Body of Christ

THE first disciples lived in the bodily presence of Jesus and enjoyed bodily communion with Him. In what manner is that communion and fellowship still possible for us today? St. Paul tells us that we are made members of the Body of Christ through baptism. But this is such a difficult statement that it requires further elucidation.

It means that although Jesus has died and risen again, the baptized can still live in His bodily presence and enjoy bodily communion with Him. So far from impoverishing them His departure brings a new gift. The disciples enjoyed exactly the same bodily communion as is available for us today, nay rather, our communion with Him is richer and more assured than it was for them, for the communion and presence which we have is that of the glorified Lord. Our faith must be aware of the greatness of this gift. The Body of Christ is the ground and assurance of that faith. It is the one and perfect gift whereby we become partakers of salvation. It is indeed newness of life. In the Body of Christ we are caught up into eternity by the act of God.

After the fall of Adam, God never ceased to send His word to sinful men. He sought after them in order to take them to Himself. The whole purpose for which the word came was to restore lost mankind to fellowship with God. The word of God came both as a promise and as a law. It became weak and of no account for our sake. But men rejected the word, refusing to give ear and to return to God. They offered sacrifices and performed works which they fondly imagined God would

accept in place of themselves, but with these they purchased their independence from Him. Then the supreme miracle occurs. The Son of God becomes man. The word is made flesh. He who had existed from all eternity in the glory

of the Father, He who in the beginning was the agent of creation (which means that the created world can be known only through Him and in Him) He who was very God (i Cor. viii. 6; 2 Cor. viii. 9; Phil. ii. 6 *ff.* | Eph. i. 4; Col. i. 16; John

i. x *ff.* | Heb. i. 1 *ff.*) accepts humanity by taking upon Himself our human nature, “sinful flesh” as the Bible calls it, and human form (Rom. viii. 3; Gal. iv. 4; Phil. ii. 6 *ff.*). God takes humanity to Himself, not merely as heretofore through the spoken word, but in the Body of Jesus. Of His mercy God sends His Son in the flesh, that therein He may bear the whole human race and bring it to Himself. The Son of God takes to Himself the whole human race bodily, that race which in its hatred of God and in the pride of its flesh had rejected the incorporeal, invisible word of God. Now this humanity, in all its weakness, is, by the mercy of God, taken up in the Body of Jesus in true bodily form.

As they contemplated the miracle of the Incarnation, the early Fathers became passionately convinced that while it was true to say that God took human nature upon Him, it was wrong to say that He chose a perfect individual man and united Himself to him. God was made man, and while that means that He took upon Him our entire human nature with all its infirmity, sinfulness and corruption, it does not mean that He took upon Him the man Jesus. Unless we draw this distinction we shall misunderstand the whole message of the gospel. The Body of Jesus Christ, in which we are taken up with the whole human race, has now become the ground of our salvation.

It is *sinful* flesh that He wears, though He was Himself without sin (2 Cor. v. 21; Heb. iv. 15). In His human body He takes all flesh upon Himself. “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows.” It is solely in virtue of the Incarnation that Jesus was able to take all our infirmities and bear our diseases (Matt. viii. 15-17). “He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities.” He bore our sins, and was able to forgive them because He had “taken up” our sinful flesh in His Body. Similarly, Jesus received sinners and took them to Himself (Luke xv. 2) because He bore them in His own body. With the coming of Christ the “acceptable (**СЕКТОВ**) year of the Lord” had dawned (Luke iv. 19).

Consequently the incarnate Son of God existed so to speak in two capacities—in His own Person, and as the Representative of the New Humanity. Every act He wrought was performed on behalf of the New Humanity which He bore in His body. That is why He is called the Second Adam or the last Adam (1 Cor. xv. 45). Like Christ Himself, the first Adam had been both an individual man and the representative of the whole human race. He too bore the whole race in himself. In him the human race fell, in Adam (which means “man” in Hebrew) man fell (Rom. v. 19). Christ is the Second Man (1 Cor. xv. 47) in whom the New Humanity is created. He is the “New Man”.

We must start at this point if we wish to understand the nature of that bodily fellowship and communion which the disciples enjoyed with their Master. It is no accident that to follow Him meant cleaving to Him bodily. That was the natural consequence of the Incarnation. Had He been merely a prophet or a teacher, He would not have needed followers, but only pupils and hearers. But since He is the incarnate Son of God who came in human flesh, He needs a community of followers, who will participate not merely in

His teaching, but also in His Body. The disciples have communion and fellowship in the Body of Christ. They live and suffer in bodily communion with Him. That is why they must bear the burden of the cross. In Him they are all borne and taken up.

The earthly body of Jesus underwent crucifixion and death. In that death the New Humanity undergoes crucifixion and death. Jesus Christ had taken upon Him not a man, but the human “form”, sinful flesh, human “nature”, so that all whom He bore suffer and die with Him. It is all our infirmities and all our sin that He bears on the cross. It is *we* who are crucified with Him, and *we* who die with Him. True, His earthly body undergoes death, but only to rise again as an incorruptible, glorious body. It is the same body —the tomb was empty—and yet it is a new body. And so as He dies, Jesus bears the human race, and carries it onward to His resurrection. Thus too, He bears forever in His glorified body the humanity which He had taken upon Him on earth.

How then do we come to participate in the Body of Christ, who did all this for us? It is certain that there can be no fellowship or communion with Him except through His Body. For only through that Body can we find acceptance and salvation. The answer is, through the two sacraments of His Body, baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Note how in recording the incident of the water and blood which issued from the side of the crucified body of Christ, St. John refers unmistakably to the elements of the two sacraments (John xix. 34, 35). St. Paul corroborates this when he rivets our membership of the Body of Christ exclusively to the two sacraments.¹ The sacraments begin and end in the Body of Christ, and it is only the presence of that Body which makes them what they are. The word of preaching is insufficient to make us members of Christ’s Body; the sacraments also have to play their part. Baptism incorporates us into the

unity of the Body of Christ, and the Lord's supper fosters and sustains our fellowship and communion (κοινωνία) in that Body. Baptism makes us members of the Body of Christ. We are "baptized into" Christ (Gal. iii. 27; Rom. vi. 3); we are "baptized into one body" (1 Cor. xii. 13). Our death in baptism conveys the gift of the Holy Spirit, and enables us to appropriate the fruits of the redemption which Christ wrought for us in His body. The communion of the Body of Christ, which we receive as the disciples received it in the early days, is the sign and pledge that we are "with Christ" and "in Christ", and that He is "in us". Rightly understood, the doctrine of the Body is the clue to the meaning of these expressions.

All men are "with Christ" as a consequence of the Incarnation, for in the Incarnation Jesus bore our whole human nature. That is why His life, death and resurrection are events

¹ Eph. iii. 6 likewise embraces the whole gift of salvation—the word, baptism, and the Lord's supper.

in which all men really participate (Rom. v. *in*, 1 Cor. xv. 22; 2 Cor. v. 14). But Christians are "with Christ" in a special sense. For the rest of mankind to be with Christ means death, but for Christians it is a means of grace. Baptism is their assurance that they are "dead with Christ" (Rom. vi. 8), "crucified with Him" (Rom. vi. 6; Col. ii. 20), "buried with Him" (Rom. vi. 4; Col. ii. 12), "planted together in the likeness of his death" (Rom. vi. 5). All this creates in them the assurance that they will also live with Him (Rom. vi. 8; Eph. ii. 5; Col. ii. 12; 2 Tim. ii. 11; 2 Cor. vii. 3). "We with Christ"—for Christ is Emmanuel, "God with us". Only when we know Christ in this way is our being with Him the source of grace. The Christian who is baptized into (in) Christ is baptized into the fellowship of His sufferings. Thus not only

does the individual become a member of the Body of Christ, but the fellowship of the baptized becomes a body which is identical with Christ's own Body. The Christians are "in Christ" (E.V.) and "Christ in them". They are no longer "under the law" (Rom. ii. 12, iii. 19), no longer "in the flesh" (Rom. vii. 5, viii. 3, 8, 9; 2 Cor. x. 3), no longer "in Adam" (1 Cor. xv. 12) but are henceforth "in Christ" in the totality of their being and life, whatever form it may take.

It was St. Paul's achievement to express the miracle of the Incarnation in an infinite variety of ways. All the foregoing may be summed up in the single phrase—Christ is "for us", not only in word and in His attitude towards us, but in His bodily life. He occupies in His body the place where we should be before God. He suffers and dies in our stead, and can do so because of the Incarnation (2 Cor. v. 21; Gal. iii. 13, i. 4; Tit. ii. 14; 1 Thess. v. 10, etc.). The Body of Christ is in the strictest sense of the word "for us" as it hangs on the cross, and "for us" as it is given to us in baptism and in the Lord's supper. This is the ground of our fellowship with Jesus Christ.

The Body of Christ is identical with the New Humanity which He has taken upon Him. It is in fact the Church. Jesus Christ is at once Himself and His Church (1 Cor. xii.

12). Since the first Whit-Sunday the Life of Christ has been perpetuated on earth in the form of His Body, the Church. Here is His body, crucified and risen, here is the humanity He took upon Him. To be baptized therefore means to become a member of the Church, a member of the Body of Christ (Gal. iii. 28; x Cor. xii. 13). To be in Christ therefore means to be in the Church. But if we are in the Church we are verily and bodily in Christ. Now we perceive the whole wealth of meaning which lies behind the idea of the Body of Christ.

Since the ascension, Christ's place on earth has been taken by His Body, the Church. The Church is the real presence of Christ. Once we have realized this truth we are well on the way to recovering an aspect of the Church's being which has been sadly neglected in the past. We should think of the Church not as an institution, but as a *person*, though of course a person in a unique sense.

The Church is One Man. All who are baptized are "one in Christ" (Gal. iii. 28; Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. x. 17). The Church is "Man", the "New Man" (kccivos ccvOpcoiros). The Church is created as the New Man through Christ's death on the cross. On the cross the enmity between Jew and Gentile was abolished, that enmity which rent the world in two, "that he might create in himself of the twain one new man, so making peace" (Eph. ii. 15). The "new man" is one, not many. Beyond the confines of the Church, the New Man, there is only the old humanity with all its divisions.

This New Man, the Church, is "after God created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph. iv. 24). It is "being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him" (Col. iii. 10). In this passage Christ alone is identified with the image of God. Adam was the first man to be created after the image of the Creator, but he forfeited that image at the Fall. Now a Second Man, a Last Adam, is created after the divine image—Jesus Christ (1 Cor. xv. 47). Hence the New Man is both Christ and the Church. Christ is the New Humanity in the New Man. Christ is the Church.

The relation of the individual believer to the New Man is expressed in terms of "putting on" the New Man.² The New Man is like a garment made to fit the individual believer. He must clothe himself with the image of God, that is, with Christ and the Church. In baptism a man puts on Christ, and that means the same as being incorporated into the body,

into the One Man, in whom there is neither Greek nor Jew, neither bond nor free. No one can become a new man except by entering the Church, and becoming a member of the Body of Christ. It is impossible to become a new man as a solitary individual. The New Man means more than the individual believer after he has been justified and sanctified, it means the Church, the Body of Christ, in fact it means Christ Himself.

Through His Spirit, the crucified and risen Lord exists as the Church, as the New Man. It is just as true to say that His Body is the New Humanity as to say that He is God incarnate dwelling in eternity. As the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ bodily, so the Christian believers are filled with Christ (Col. ii. *g*; Eph. iii. 19). Indeed, they are themselves that fulness in so far as they are in the Body and in so far as it is He alone who filleth all in all.

When we have recognized the unity between Christ and His Body, the Church, we must also hold fast to the complementary truth of Christ's Lordship over the Body. That is why St. Paul, as he comes to develop the theme of the Body of Christ, calls Him the Head of the Body (Eph. i. 22; Col. i. 18, ii. 19). This assertion symbolizes and preserves the truth that Christ stands over against His Church. The historical fact in the story of our redemption which makes this truth essential, and rules out any idea of a mystical fusion between Christ and His Church, is the Ascension of Christ (and His Second Coming). The same Christ who is present in His Church will also come again. It is the same Lord and the same Church in both places, and it is one and the same Body, whether we think of His presence on earth or of His coming again on the clouds of heaven. But it makes a great deal of difference whether we are here or there. So it is necessary to give due weight both to the unity of Christ and His Church and to their distinction.

The Church is One man; it is the Body of Christ. But it is also many, a fellowship of members (Rom. xii. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 12 ff.). Since the Church is a body made up of many members, no separate member, such as hand or eye or foot, can transcend its own individuality. That is the meaning of St. Paul's analogy of the body. The hand can never take the place of the eye, or the eye the place of the ear. Each preserves its separate identity and function. On the other hand, they all preserve that identity and function only as members of the one body, as a fellowship united in service. It is the unity of the whole Church which makes each member what he is and the fellowship what it is, just as it is Christ and His Body which makes the Church what it is. Here we encounter the office and work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who brings Christ to each several member (Eph. iii. 17, 1 Cor. xii. 3), who builds up the Church by gathering the individual members together, although the whole building is already complete in Christ (Eph. ii. 22, iv. 12; Col. ii. 2). He creates the fellowship (2 Cor. xiii. 13) of the members of the Body (Rom. xv. 30, v. 5; Col. i. 8; Eph. iv. 3). The Lord is the Spirit (2 Cor. iii. 17). The Church of Christ is the presence of Christ through the Holy Spirit. In this way the life of the Body of Christ becomes our own life. In Christ we no longer live our own lives, but He lives His life in us. The life of the faithful in the Church is indeed the *Life of Christ in them* (Gal. ii. 20; Rom. viii. 10; 2 Cor. xiii. 5; 1 John iv. 15).

In the fellowship of the crucified and glorified body of Christ we participate in His suffering and glory. His cross is the burden which is laid on His Body, the Church. All its sufferings borne beneath this cross are the sufferings of Christ Himself. This suffering first takes the form of the baptismal death, and after that the daily dying of the Christians (1 Cor. xv. 31) in the power of their baptism. But there is a far greater form of suffering than this, one which bears an ineffable promise. For while it is true that only the

suffering of Christ Himself can atone for sin, and that His suffering and triumph took place “for us”, yet to some, who are not ashamed of their fellowship in His body, He vouchsafes the immeasurable grace and privilege of suffering “for Him”, as He did for them. No greater glory could He have granted to His own, no higher privilege can the Christian enjoy, than to suffer “for Christ”. When that happens, something comes to pass which is inconceivable under the law. For according to the law we can only be punished for our own sins. Under the law there is nothing that a man can suffer for his own *good*, still less for the good of another, and least of all for the good of Christ. The body of Christ, which was given for us, which suffered the punishment of our sins, makes us free to take our share of suffering and toil ‘for Christ”, for the benefit of Him who did everything possible for us. This is the miracle of grace we enjoy in our fellowship in the Body of Christ (Phil. i. 25, ii. 17; Rom. viii. 35 ff.; 1 Cor. iv. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 10, v. 20, xiii. 9). Although Christ has fulfilled all the vicarious suffering necessary for our redemption, His suffering on earth is not finished yet. He has, in His grace, left a residue (OcrreprimaTa) of suffering for His Church to fulfil in the interval before His Second Coming (Col. i. 24). This suffering is allowed to benefit the Body of Christ, the Church. Whether we have any right to assume that this suffering has power to atone for sin (cf. 1 Pet. iv. 1), we have no means of knowing. But we do at least know that the man who suffers in the power of the body of Christ suffers in a representative capacity “for” the Church, the Body of Christ, being privileged to endure himself what others are spared. “. . . always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Cor. iv. 10-12; cf. i. 5-7, xiii. 9; Phil, ii. 17). The Body of Christ has its own allotted portion of suffering. God grants

one man the grace to bear special suffering in place of another, and this suffering must at all costs be endured and overcome. Blessed is he whom God deems worthy to suffer for the Body of Christ. Such suffering is joy indeed (Col. i. 24; Phil. ii. 17), enabling the believer to boast that he bears the dying of Jesus Christ and the marks of Christ in his body (2 Cor. iv. 10; Gal. vi. 17). The Christian may now serve so that "Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. i. 10). Such vicarious activity and passivity on the part of the members of the Body is the very life of Christ, who wills to be formed in His members (Gal. iv. 19).

There is nothing new in all this. We are simply following in the steps of the first disciples of Christ.

It would be appropriate to conclude this chapter by summarizing the witness of the scriptures as a whole to the doctrine of the Body of Christ. The New Testament doctrine of the Body of Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecy concerning the temple of God. We are to understand the temple, not from Hellenistic usage, but from the teaching of the prophets. First, we find David proposing to build a temple for God. But when he consults the prophet, he is told what God thinks of his design: "Shalt thou build me an house to dwell in? . . . the Lord telleth thee that the Lord will make thee an house" (2 Sam. vii. 5,11). Only God can build a temple for Himself. Yet paradoxically, David receives the promise that one sprung from his seed shall build the house, and that his seed shall endure forever (verses 12 and 13). "I will be his father, and he shall be my son" (verse 14). Solomon, the "son of peace", the peace of God with the house of David, claimed this promise for himself. He built a temple and his action was approved by God. But this temple was not enough to fulfil the promise. It was built by the hands of men, and so was doomed to destruction.

The prophecy still awaited fulfilment. Still the People of God look for a temple built by the Son of David whose kingdom shall endure forever. The temple at Jerusalem was destroyed more than once, a sign that it was not the temple of God's promise. Where then was the true temple? Christ Himself answers that question by applying the prophecy to His Body. "The Jews therefore said, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his Body. When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he spake this: and they believed the word which Jesus had said" (John ii. 20 ff.). The temple which the Jews were looking for was the Body of Christ, of which the temple of the Old Testament was but the shadow (Col. ii. 17; Heb. x. x; viii, 5). Jesus was speaking of His human body. He knows that the temple of His earthly body will be destroyed, like the temple of Jerusalem. But He will rise again, and the new temple, the eternal temple, will be His risen and glorified body. This is the house which God builds for His Son; but it is also built by the Son for the Father. In this house God dwells verily and indeed, as does also the New Humanity, the Church of Christ. The incarnate Christ is Himself the temple of the fulfilment. Similarly the Apocalypse, speaking of the New Jerusalem, says that there is no temple in heaven, "for the Lord God Almighty, and the lamb are the temple thereof" (xxi. 22).

The temple is the place where the gracious presence of God condescends to dwell among men, and also the place where God receives His people. Both aspects of the temple are fulfilled only in the Incarnation. Here is the real presence of God in bodily form, as well as the New Humanity, for Christ has taken that humanity upon Himself in His own body. From this it follows that the Body of Christ is the place of acceptance, the place of atonement and peace between God and man. God finds man in the Body of Christ, and man

finds himself accepted by God in that same body. The Body of Christ is the spiritual temple (olkos TrveuiacnriKos) built out of living stones (1 Pet. ii. 5 *ff.*). Christ is its sole foundation and corner stone (Eph. ii. 20; 1 Cor. iii. 11), but at the same time He is in His Person the temple (oikoSout), Eph.

ii. 21), in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, replenishing and sanctifying the hearts of the faithful (1 Cor. iii. 16, vi. 19). The temple of God is the holy people in Jesus Christ. The Body of Christ is the living temple of God and of the New Humanity.

22. The Image of Christ

WHOM he foreknew, he also foreordained to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29). Here is a promise which passes all understanding. Those who follow Christ are destined to bear His image, and to be the brethren of the firstborn Son of God. Their goal is to become "as Christ". Christ's followers always have His image before their eyes, and in its light all other images are screened from their sight. It penetrates into the depths of their being, fills them and transforms them, and makes them copies of their Master. Such is the effect of daily fellowship and communion with Christ. No follower of Jesus can contemplate His image in a spirit of cold detachment. That image has the power to transform our lives, and if we surrender ourselves utterly to Him, we cannot help bearing His image ourselves. We become the sons of God, we stand side by side with Christ, our unseen Brother, bearing like Him the image of God.

When the world began, God created Adam in His own image, as the climax of His creation. He wanted to have the joy of beholding in Adam the reflection of Himself. "And behold, it

was very good.” Here, right from the beginning, is the mysterious paradox of man. He is a creature, and yet he is destined to be like his Creator. Adam is “as God”. His destiny is to bear this mystery in gratitude and obedience towards his Maker. But the false serpent persuaded Adam that he must still do something to *become* like God: he must achieve that likeness by deciding and acting for himself. Through this choice Adam rejected the grace of God, choosing instead to unravel the mystery of his being for himself, to make himself what God had already made him. That was the Fall of man. Adam became “as God”—*sicut deus*—in his own way. But now that he had made himself god, he no longer had a God. He ruled in solitude as a creator-god in a God-forsaken world.

But the riddle of human nature was still unsolved. With the loss of the God-like nature God had given him, man had forfeited the destiny of his being, which was to be like God. In short, man had ceased to be man. He must live without the ability to live. Herein lies the paradox of human nature and the source of all our woe. Since that day, the sons of Adam in their pride have striven to recover the divine image by their own efforts. But the more they try, and the more apparent their success, the more alienated from God they become. Their misshapen form, modelled after the god they have invented for themselves, grows more and more like the image of Satan, though they are unaware of it. The divine image, which God in His grace had given to man, is lost forever on this earth.

But God does not neglect His lost sheep. He plans to recreate His image in man, to recover His first delight in His handiwork. But there is only one way to achieve this purpose and that is for God, out of sheer mercy, to assume the likeness of fallen man. As man can no longer be like the image of God, God must become like the image of man. But

this restoration of the divine image concerns not just a part, but the whole of human nature. It is not enough for man simply to recover right ideas about God, or to obey His will in the isolated actions of his life. No, man must be refashioned as a living whole in the image of God. His whole form, body, soul and spirit, must once more bear that image on earth. Such is God's purpose and destiny for man. His good pleasure can rest only on His perfected image.

An image needs a living object, and a copy can only be formed from a model. Either man models himself on the god of his own invention, or the true and living God moulds the human form into His image. There must be a complete transformation, a "metamorphosis" (Rom. xii. 2; 2 Cor. iii. 18), if man is to be restored to the image of God. How then is that transformation to be effected?

Since fallen man cannot rediscover and assimilate the form of God, the only way is for God to take the form of man and come to him. The Son of God, who dwelt in the form of God the Father, lays aside that form, and comes to man in the form of a slave (Phil. ii. 5 ff.). The change of form, which could not take place in man, now takes place in God. The divine image which had existed from eternity with God, assumes the image of fallen, sinful man. God sends His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. viii. 2/.).

God sends His Son—here lies the only remedy. It is not enough to give man a new philosophy or a better religion. A Man comes to men. Every man bears an image. His body and his life become visible. A man is not a bare word, a thought or a will. He is above all and always a *man*, a form, an image, a brother. Hence if he is to become a new creature he must acquire not only a new mental outlook, not only a new direction of will or a new pattern of behaviour, but a new image and a new form. Now in Jesus Christ this is just what

has happened. The image of God has entered our midst, in the form of our fallen life, in the likeness of sinful flesh. In the teaching and acts of Christ, in His life and death, the image of God is revealed. In Him the divine image has been recreated on earth. The Incarnation, the words and acts of Jesus, His death on the cross, are all indispensable parts of that image. But it is not the same image as Adam bore in the primal glory of paradise. Rather, it is the image of one who enters a world of sin and death, who takes upon Himself all the sorrows of humanity, who meekly bears God's wrath and judgement against sinners, and obeys His will with unswerving devotion in suffering and death, the Man born to poverty, the friend of publicans and sinners, the Man of sorrows, rejected of man and forsaken of God. Here is God made man, here is man in the new image of God.

We know full well that the marks of the passion, the wounds of the cross, are now become the marks of grace in the Body of the risen and glorified Christ. We know that the image of the Crucified lives henceforth in the glory of the eternal High Priest, who ever maketh intercession for us in

Heaven. That Body, in which Christ had lived in the form of a servant, rose on Easter Day as a new Body, with heavenly form and radiance. But if we would have a share in that glory and radiance, we must first be conformed to the image of the Suffering Servant who was obedient to the death of the cross. If we would bear the image of His glory, we must first bear the image of His shame. There is no other way to recover the image we lost through the Fall.

To be conformed to the image of Christ is not an ideal to be striven after. It is not as though we had to imitate Him as well as we could. We cannot transform ourselves into His image, it is rather the form of Christ which seeks to be formed in us (Gal. iv. 19), and to be manifested in us.

Christ's work in us is not finished until He has perfected His own form in us. We must be assimilated to the form of Christ in its entirety, the form of Christ incarnate, crucified and glorified.

Christ took upon Himself this human form of ours. He became Man even as we are men. It is through this act of condescension that we recover our vision of what we were meant to be. And in the Incarnation the whole human race recovers the dignity of the image of God. Henceforth, any attack even on the least of men is an attack on Christ, who took the form of man, and in His own Person restored the image of God in all that bears a human form. Through fellowship and communion with the incarnate Lord, we recover our true humanity, and at the same time we are delivered from that individualism which is the consequence of sin, and retrieve our solidarity with the whole human race. By being partakers of Christ incarnate, we are partakers in the whole humanity which He bore. We now know that we have been taken up and borne in the humanity of Jesus, and therefore that new nature we now enjoy means that we too must bear the sins and sorrows of others. The incarnate Lord makes His followers the brothers of all mankind. The "philanthropy" of God (Tit. iii. 4) revealed in the Incarnation is the ground of Christian love towards all on earth that bears the name of man. The form of Christ incarnate enables the Church to grow into the Body of Christ. All the sorrows of mankind fall upon that form, and only through that form can they be borne.

The earthly form of Christ is the form that died on the cross. The image of God is the image of Christ crucified. It is to this image that the life of the disciples must be conformed: in other words, they must be conformed to His death (Phil. iii. 10; Rom. vi. 4 /.). The Christian life is a life of crucifixion (Gal. ii. 19). In baptism the form of Christ's death is

impressed upon His own. They are dead to the flesh and to sin, they are dead to the world, and the world is dead to them (Gal. vi. 14). But their dying does not end with baptism. Their life is marked by a daily dying in the war between the flesh and the spirit, and in the mortal agony the devil inflicts upon them day by day. In their sufferings Christ suffers Himself. A few, but only a few, of His followers are accounted worthy of the closest fellowship with His sufferings—the blessed martyrs. No other Christian is so closely identified with the form of Christ crucified. When Christians are exposed to public insult, when they suffer and die for His sake, Christ takes on visible form in His Church. Here we see the divine image created anew through the power of Christ crucified. But throughout the Christian life, from baptism to martyrdom, it is the same suffering and the same death.

If we are conformed to His image in His Incarnation and crucifixion, we shall also share the glory of His resurrection. “We shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. xv. 49). “We shall be like him, for we shall see him even as he is” (1 John iii. 2). If we contemplate the image of the glorified Christ, we shall be made like unto it, just as by contemplating the image of Christ crucified we are conformed to His death. We shall be drawn into His image, and identified with His form, and become a reflection of Him. That reflection of His glory will shine forth in us even in this life, even as we share His agony and bear His cross. Our life is a progress from knowledge to knowledge, from glory to glory, to an ever closer conformity with the image of the Son of God.

“But we all, with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. iii. 18).

This is what we mean when we speak of Christ dwelling in our hearts. His life on earth is not finished yet, for He continues to live in the lives of His followers. Indeed it is wrong to speak of the Christian life: we should speak rather of Christ living in us. "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified and glorified, has entered my life and taken charge. "To me to live is Christ" (Phil. i. 21). And where Christ lives, there the Father also lives, and both Father and Son through the Holy Ghost. The Holy Trinity Himself has made His dwelling in the Christian heart, filling his whole Being, and transforming him into the divine image. Christ, incarnate, crucified and glorified is formed in every Christian soul, for all are members of His Body, the Church. The Church bears the human form, the form of Christ in His death and resurrection. The Church in the first place is His image, and through the Church each several member. In the Body of Christ we are become "like Christ".

Now we can understand why the New Testament always speaks of our becoming "like Christ" (kocScos XP^{lcrT°S})- We have been transformed into the image of Christ, and are therefore destined to be like Him. He is the only "pattern" we must follow. And because He really lives His life in us, we too can "walk even as he walked" (1 John ii. 6), and "do as he has done" (John xiii. 15), "love as he has loved" (Eph. v. 2; John xiii. 34, xv. 12), "forgive as he forgave" (Col. iii. 13), "have this mind, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. ii. 5), and therefore we are able to follow the example He has left us (1 Pet. ii. 21), lay down our lives for the brethren as He did (1 John iii. 16). It is only because He became like us that we can become like Him. It is only because we are identified with Him that we can become like Him. By being transformed into His image, we are enabled to model our lives on His. By simply following Him we can perform deeds and live a life which is one with the life of

Christ. We are now able to render spontaneous obedience to the word of God. We no longer regard our own lives or the new image which we bear, for then we should at once have forfeited it. No, we must look steadfastly on the reflection of the image of Jesus Christ. The disciple looks solely at his Master. But when a man follows Jesus Christ and bears the image of the incarnate, crucified and risen Lord, when he has become the image of God, we may at last say that he has been called to be the "imitator of God". The follower of Jesus is the imitator of God. "Be ye therefore imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph. v. 1).

1

Schlatter also takes 1 Cor. xv. 29 as a reference to the baptism of martyrdom.

2

The analogy of $\sigma\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ implies the spatial metaphor of being housed or clothed. Perhaps 2 Cor. v. 1 ff. is also to be interpreted in this light. Here we find $\sigma\upsilon\sigma\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ associated with the heavenly $\sigma\kappa\eta\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, without which man is $\gamma\epsilon\gamma\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$, naked, and naturally ashamed before God. He is not covered, but longs for a covering. That happens when he is clothed with the heavenly $\sigma\kappa\eta\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$. Should not the putting on of the $\sigma\kappa\eta\tau\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ of the Church in this world find its complement in our being clothed with the heavenly Church for which Paul longs? In both cases it is the one Church we are clothed with, the tabernacle of God, the place occupied by the divine presence. It is the body of Christ which covers us.